COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 96
November 2002

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COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 96
Nov. 2002

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WITH THE SPEED OF AN ARROW, NAMOR'S WINGED FEET SHOOT THEM STRAIGHT FOR THE PLANE!
QUIETLY, NOW, AND HURRY! WE MUST GET RID OF THE PILOT!
NAMOR HURLS HIMSELF UPWARD, AND GRAPPLES WITH THE PILOT -
THE AIRMAN IS NO TEST FOR NAMOR'S SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH, AND WITH A TERRIFIC BLOW, NAMOR SENDS HIM FLYING INTO SPACE!
DORMA, I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE YOU NOW - WRECK THE SHIP SOMEWHERE, AND SWIM BACK HOME - I'LL GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU LATER -
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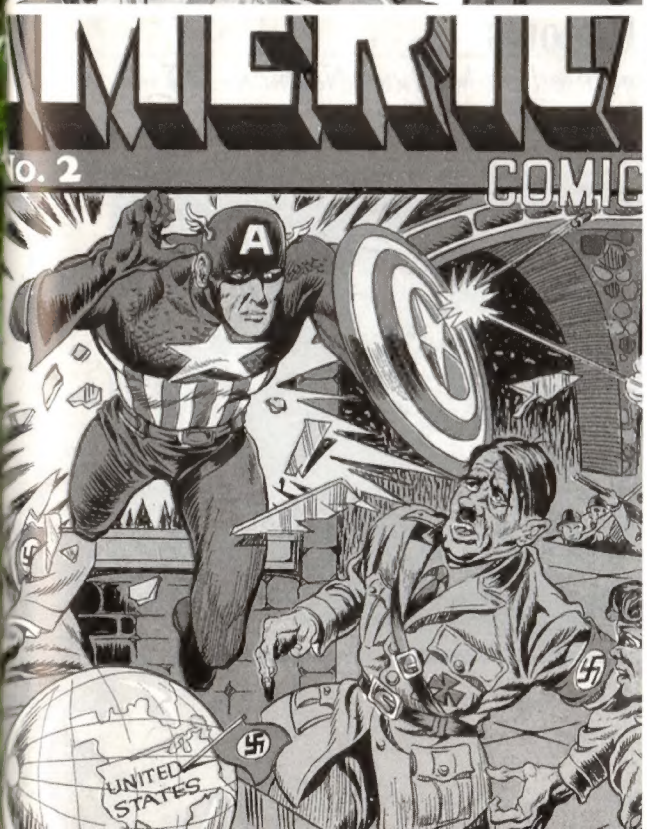

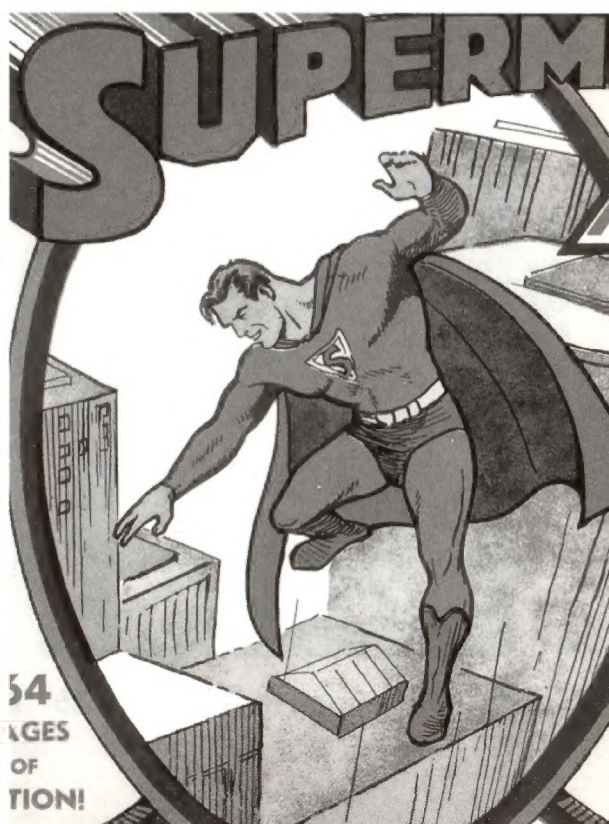

CONTENTS

96 Nov
NUMBER 2002

OH... HERE IS MR. CANYON, NOW...
HORIZONS
IT'S A MR. DIZZEE, SECRETARY TO COPPER CALHOON, THE BIG SHE-WOLF OF THE STOCK MARKET...
HMM-THEY CALL HER "THE COPPERHEAD" I WONDER IF SHE HOWLS OR HISSES?
MIS-TER CANYON! PEOPLE DO NOT REFUSE WHEN SUMMONED BY COPPER CALHOON!
AND ALL THIS TIME I THOUGHT I WAS A PEOPLE! GOOD MORROW, MR. DOOZIE!
WHY, MR. DIZZY, WHAT YOU SAID!..AND ME SO YOUNG AND IMPRESSIONABLE! ...THE CLICK YOU HEAR WILL MEAN YOU'RE SOLOING!
WELL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO HAVE MONEY TO PAY THIS OFFICE RENT BUT I GUESS IT'S BAD FORM TO GET INTO REGULAR HABITS LIKE THAT...
29
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© FIELD ENTERPRISES

© ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS

FEATURES

Ringing Out the Old, Ringing in the New!
Caniff on the Cusp Between Terry and Steve! by R.C. Harvey **29**

Marc Hempel!
Naked Talent! by Jennifer M. Contino **42**

The Man Who Invited the President to Lunch!
The Career of Caniff! by R.C. Harvey **50**

COLUMNS

Nolan's Notebook
The Prolific Pines Company! by Michelle Nolan **8**

Funnies Farrago
Here There Be the Dragon Lady! by R.C. Harvey **16**

The Naiman Report
The Wacky Hall of Fame! by Michael Naiman **75**

CBM MarketWatch and Market Reports
Sampling marketplace indicator sales! Compiled by Michael Naiman...**77**

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Volume 3 • Number 96
November 2002
A Gemstone Publication

DEPARTMENTS

Inspiration Central:
Andy Kubert **70**
Collectable Character
Statues **72**
Advertising & Subs **76**
Back Issue Dept. **80**

ABOUT THE COVERS:

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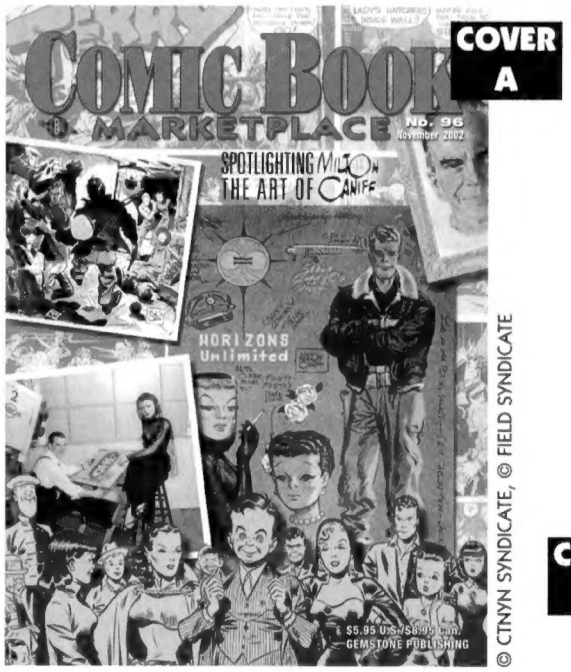
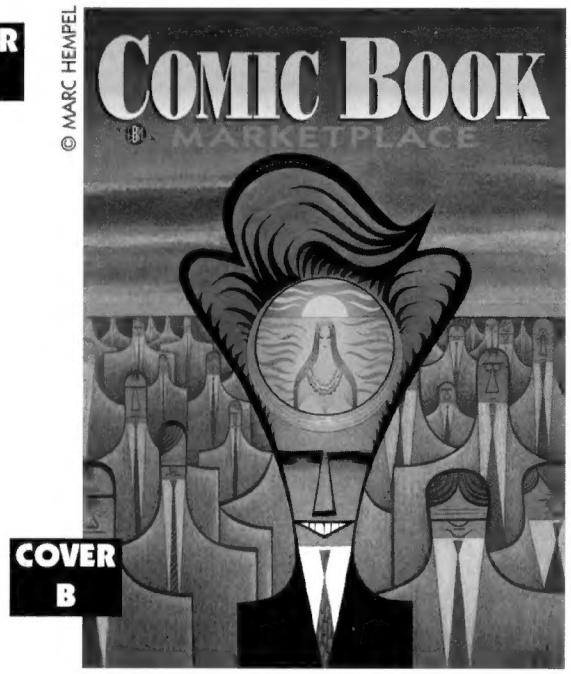
...WONDER WHY CANIFF DIDN'T COME UP WITH A DRAGON LADY FOR ME ?
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU LIKE, WHY DON'T YOU ASK AT HOME, - ROUND-EYE ?
TERRY
SUMMER
FOR COMICON '72
Best wishes
MILTON CANIFF
16
© Field Enterprises, Inc., 1972

"In drawings for fans, Caniff could let the characters from his two strips mingle a little." —R.C. Harvey





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

When I agreed to take over *Comic Book Marketplace* from Gary Carter, I knew that I had a tough act to follow. During his tenure as editor, Gary had accumulated a large number of devoted fans who enjoyed Gary's steering the good ship *CBM* through the waters of the world of comics.

And while I appreciated what Gary was doing with *CBM*, when it came my turn to take the helm (this expression always makes me think of my favorite Carl Barks cover, the sailboat cover which we used on *CBM* 95, where Donald is fearlessly and optimistically steering his sailboat on to his next adventure), when it was my turn to steer the ship I decided that I needed to bring some of my own interests and prejudices to *CBM*, rather than try to follow exactly in Gary's footsteps. And so the magazine took a turn—for some readers, a turn for the better, and for others, a turn for the worse—by extending coverage of newspaper comics, with new articles on one of my favorite artists, Frank Frazetta, and so on.

In issue 94 of *CBM* we included a survey form, to be filled out and returned by our readers, to try to ascertain which of these newer features were resonating with our readers, and those survey forms are now starting to trickle in, and I am looking at every one of them. Please send in your comments if you have not yet done so. In our next issue we will summarize the results of the survey.

This is the third issue of the "new *CBM*" to concentrate on a newspaper strip artist, the last of the "big three" of Hal Foster, Alex Raymond and Milton Caniff. Of course there have been many more wonderful strip artists, but these three giants are usually given the nod as the three most influential and talented adventure strip artists. Our resident columnist R.C. Harvey just happens to have devoted a large part of his life in recent years writing an exhaustive biography of Caniff, and Harv's great work fills most of this issue. In fact, we had so much good Caniff material from Harv that for this issue we had to drop a couple of regular columns, "Oddball Comics" and "The Greatest Comic Book Ever" to make room. Both columns will be back in the next issue.

Our recent Spider-Man Special issue contained a centerfold of stickers of covers to fill missing spaces in the *Gerber Photo-Journal Guide*. In printing these, we had about 100 of these sticker sets left over, so if you need an extra one, we'll send you one for $3 (includes postage) as long as they last.

Russ

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So You Think You Know What Comics Are About?

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Geppi's Comic World started out in the basement of a TV repair store more than 27 years ago and went on to become a true Maryland success story. Now you can visit our new store stocked with an amazing array of comics, magazines, graphic novels, trade paperbacks, hard cover collections and other great items. Rediscover the magic at our brand new location!

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

GASB!

Well, issue 93 was another unique look at a wide variety of interesting memorabilia. I really liked "Funnies Farrago" ("Raymond and the Right Stuff") this issue but I have to say that I really disliked the over-stated intellectualism in the analysis of Raymond's strip art by Dave Winiewicz.

As a sci-fi fan I found the look at *Flash Gordon* interesting although I am concerned that other than the "Market Reports" there were only two pages devoted to Golden, Atomic, Silver or Bronze Age comics. I guess like the modern comic convention you have removed the G, A, S, B masthead from your book because comic books are no longer the primary focus for this magazine. I also am getting the impression that you are primarily interested in reviewing comic and strip art and artist. I am as interested in comic writers, editors and the history of comic publishers as I am the artists, for what its worth.

Brian Oursler

After reading the Spider-Man Special and your recent issue I felt that I had to send in my feelings on the last year that you have been editing. Basically, I feel that you should change the title of the magazine to reflect the direction you have taken it in—something like *Comic Art Marketplace*.

The focus has shifted from comic books more to the art which just happens to appear in comic books and other places. Now Hal Foster, Alex Raymond and Frazetta have influenced practically every comic book artist from the '40s to today. But, they have not worked in comic books. Yes, Frazetta started in comics, but most of his work that influenced others comes from the paperback book covers that he did after he stopped working in comic books.

After reading the reprints in the Spider-Man Special I noticed that the previous editor approached comic books as literature. Discussing what they were about as much as how they came to be rendered. And was clearly focused on comic books. The Special was filled with articles that addressed comic books. Like the background on Spidey's first appearance, and the release of *Spiderman* #1. And there have been fewer of these types of materials in the past year and more of a reliance on interviews. Some issues have two interviews with the same artist! I feel that articles have more information than interviews, which just rely on the memory of the subject interviewed—and what questions happened to be asked at the time.

In one of your editorials you said that comic books cover a wide field, and you wanted to show that in the magazine. But I feel that you've actually just shown where comic books touch other medias—movies, statues, newspaper strips and the like—and that you've cut down on comic books with a few regular [columns] and an interview now and then. Interviews are a bit of a copout compared to an article based on solid research.

Yes I'm one of those who liked the issues about one character, or certain titles, and gave plot summaries.

And finally, I think you're wasting the color pages. With the Carters, you got a color version of all the covers of the comics that were talked about in the issue. Now, there are more color pages, but mostly it is just text over a green, blue or amber background. Yes, there have been some fancy layouts—working in panels with the text and such. And you have done the covers for the EC artists, and the Joe Kubert issue was good.

But couldn't you present color versions of the books talked about in the [columns] by Nolan, Shaw and Squirek which are just printed in b&w? And in the Spider-Man Special you had a page with all those Spidey number ones and you just printed them in b&w. Please, more reprints of color covers and less pages of text over a color background.

I disagree with the recent review of the Spider-Man movie. I felt that it spent much too much time with the origin story. And seemed to be more of a remake of the 1977 Superman Movie. With the relationship between Parker and Watson more like that of Clark Kent and Lois Lane. Mary Jane was never attracted to Spider-Man, and was always interested in Peter Parker. The love triangle comes from Superman.

I don't think I'm being a nitpicky fanboy. All this movie needed to be was a good Spider-Man story instead of a remake of Superman dressed up as Spider-Man. Sincerely,

Matthew Clark

Yo, Russ—

I'm glad to see Marc Hempel getting some ink, too. He does superb stuff. Best,

R.C. Harvey, Champaign, IL

Hey CBM,

Just a quick note to let you know how much I enjoyed the Spectre article "The Avenger of Blood" by Rob Hughes in the last issue of *CBM*. Great stuff and also nice to see the covers and some of the interior panels as well. Nice graphics by Jack Der too. I have been emailing and snail-mailing DC for years now to put the adventures of the Golden Age Spectre in Archives form. Seeing as how most of us could never afford the originals, a bound copy of his early adventures would make for a fantastic read. (You reading this, DC?!) Anyhow, once again, another great article. Best,

Bob Kuhl, Ohio

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CBM ASKS CGC

[Questions answered by Steve Borock, Primary Grader, CGC.]

I submitted a comic book signed on the cover by the artist and I got it back in a green label. What does that mean?

The green label is the CGC Qualified label. In this case the Qualified label is used to communicate the grade of the book ignoring the writing on the cover. The label clearly says that there is a name on the cover. Some collectors consider a signature something that adds to the desirability of a book, while others, just as legitimately, consider it a significant defect. CGC simply grades the book as it would be without the signature, but clearly expresses that it is there. CGC puts clearly on the label, "NAME WRITTEN ON COVER IN MARKER" and we also give it the green Qualified label.

What is the difference between the Qualified label with a signature and the Signature Series label?

CGC does not authenticate signatures on the green Qualified labels. CGC does however stand behind the authentication of the signature if it is on a Signature Series label. This means that a CGC representative was present when the book was signed, or that CGC's policy for Signature Series label status was met.

Can I get a discount if I submit a lot of comic books?

The only kind of discount that is offered involves the Internet. CGC accepts Internet submissions from online forms on various websites. Some of these websites give up to a 20% discount off CGC's published prices. To take advantage of these discounts follow these instructions: Go to www.cgccomics.com, click on the "Services and Submissions" button and then go to "How To Submit." There is a list of about 35 websites that you can submit books to us through. Simply fill out the form online and print it out on paper. Send the comic books, the completed forms and payment directly to CGC. You do not need to send your books to the owner of the web site.

Why can't they manufacture the slabs from a more impact-resistant grade of plastic? The current slabs seem to crack or shatter with a minimum of actual impact force. I worked summers during my college years at a plastics manufacturing facility, and I know for a fact that, through use of different additives in the polymerization process, a grade of plastic with comparable rigidity to the current slabs can be produced with an exponentially higher degree of impact resistance. I would certainly think that, given the extremely high value of many of the books being slabbed, protection of the book would be a major consideration. And safety of the book is greatly compromised when the slab breaks so easily.

After spending much time and research on this, the material we have chosen for the outer holder is tamper evident while at the same time easy to crack the comic out if desired. We are always looking to improve the materials and additives for the CGC holder and we are open to any suggestions.

Setting the Standard for Prolific Production

The volume and versatility of the Pines company

You might say the publisher that labeled its pulp magazines "A Thrilling Publication" produced an exciting product with a startling combination of pulps, paperbacks and comics and a highly popular circulation base.

Ouch! A triple pun in the lead paragraph!

Seriously, though—were you aware that the publishing empire of Ned Pines occupied more sheer space on the newsstands from the standpoint of versatility and volume than any other firm in the 1940s?

Think how many millions of readers must have picked up pulps with the familiar titles "Thrilling," "Exciting," "Popular" and "Startling."

Or, as the fan who inspired this column asked me at the San Diego convention last summer, "Was there anything those Pines people didn't try?"

Not many fans realize that sheer volume of paper popular culture produced by "those Pines people" was unsurpassed in the 1940s and '50s.

The Pines company was known variously as Standard, Better, Nedor, Popular Library, Visual Editions and Literary Enterprises, among other names. But regardless of the labels the firm attached to any given pulp, paperback or comic, the company holds a unique status among fans who enjoy at least a passing interest in all three forms of popular culture.

It's probably no coincidence that all three areas of Pines publications are known primarily for the collectability of their covers rather than what was inside. What other 1940s company could match the inimitable likes of Alex Schomburg on the comics along with stunning work by Rudolph Belarski, Earle Bergey and George Rozen on its pulps and paperbacks? And it's true—in this case, you surely can't judge a book, pulp or comic by its cover, since what was inside was most often not nearly as compelling.

This is not to say Pines did not produce a fair share of decent stories and interior art. It's just that the good folks at Pines are remembered a lot more for their spectacular covers than their literary achievements. There are no pop culture icons among the Pines characters produced during the company's peak of production in the 1940s.

Pines indeed produced a whole lot of fiction that was fun, covering at least 3500 pulps over the 1931-58 period (and that doesn't even include the soap opera-ish *Ranch Romances* after Pines corralled that title in 1950). But, other than a handful of science fiction stories, few of the company's pulp tales can stand up to the memorable content of classic titles such as *Black Mask*, *The Shadow* and *Weird Tales*. Likewise, few of the Popular Library paperbacks were a literary match for Gold Medal or Bantam, nor were most of the Standard comics anywhere near as memorable as those from DC, Fawcett or Dell.

Pines, though, remains richly deserving of the attention of collectors,

Even the uncredited artists produced high-impact covers, such as this "fighting editor" cover for the March 1945 issue of **Thrilling Detective**. There were no word processors in those days!

giving them what amounts to a consistently entertaining "generic time machine" to enjoy.

The Pines company can be more fully appreciated now that we finally have a pair of recently published, long-awaited guides to the pulps—*The Adventure House Guide to the Pulps* by Doug Ellis, John Locke and John Gunnison, and *The Ultimate Guide to the Pulps* by Tim Cottrill.

Our general knowledge and appreciation of the pulps has been exponentially improved by these two thick books. That includes a fuller appreciation of what Pines produced in pulps along with his previously far more thoroughly indexed line of paperbacks and comic books (Pines also produced adult-interest magazines and astrology publications).

I especially appreciate these two magnificent pulp indexes because my collecting interests are focused primarily on 1940s and '50s comics, pulps and paperbacks. The primary difference in the two publications, by the way, is that *The Adventure House Guide* confirms the existence of more pulps—more than 39,000!—and has more cover reproductions than any other book. In contrast, *The Ultimate Guide* is not only the first thorough pulp price guide but also contains an extensive, previously unheard of listing of writers and cover artists.

Just for fun—thanks to these two thick guides, plus my collection of about 1,400 pulps and a reference library with more than three dozen other books on pulps—I came up with some intriguing—and I hope surprising—numbers, particularly with Pines in mind.

But first, let's dig in with a brief digression until we return to Pines:

When Street & Smith killed its pulp line in 1949, one national news magazine heralded the move as "the death of the pulps." There's no question the lowly literary genre was dealt a heavy blow, but nothing could have been further from the truth—despite the constant repetition of this myth in newspaper, magazine and fanzine articles of the past 50 years.

In fact, you could win a bet on this fact: Did you know that there were still more pulps produced in the 1950s than digest magazines of fiction? I'll bet not one fan in 100 would guess that!

The Adventure House Guide lists no fewer than 2,893 pulp fiction magazines produced with 1950s dates alone! Compare this to the 1,915 anthology fiction digest listed in *The Ultimate Guide* as produced in the entire 20-year span from 1940-59 (that does not include the single-novel digest-sized paperbacks of the same period, which are instead part of the purview of the paperback price guides).

I contributed information to *The Adventure House Guide* and I can vouch for the volume's authenticity, since the authors included only pulps for which they could personally verify existence. In fact, that book doesn't miss much, even though there are still the expected holes in the knowledge of romance, sports and western genres compared to the far more extensively indexed science fiction, detective, hero and horror pulps.

In the year and a half since I contributed my batch of information for *The Adventure House Guide*, I have been fortunate to acquire another 200 or so pulps, including

Earle Bergey produced a multitude of pretty covers for the Pines romance, sports and science fiction magazines, such as this unusual portrayal for the June 1947 issue of **Thrilling Love**.

many obscure sports title. Even so, I have discovered only eight pulps that were not listed in *The Adventure House Guide*, which is understandably weakest in the obscure Double-Action pulps. This group—also known as Blue Ribbon and Columbia—was the same company that produced MLJ and later Archie comic books.

Likewise, I have every reason to believe that *The Ultimate Guide* is virtually 100 percent complete in its listing of digests, which are not indexed in *The Adventure House Guide*.

At any rate, my guess is that excluding a few dozen obscure 1950s pulps still to be discovered, slightly more than 3,000 pulps were published in the fifties—over 50 percent more than the number of digests!

By my count, *The Adventure House Guide* lists at least 9,635 U.S. pulps with 1940s dates to go along with the 2,893 from the 1950s. Add the 1,915 anthology digests published from 1940-59, and you have a whopping total of some 14,443 "non-slick" magazines of fiction produced over the final two decades of pulpdom.

Think about it—a little more than 7,300 days passed during those two decades. That means there was enough reading published for any one person to have two fresh fiction magazines to read every day for 20 years! And, trust me, there were even more pulps produced in the 1930s than in any other decade.

Compare that with the sorry situation that prevails today, with only a handful of fiction magazines of any type being produced. Thank heaven for paperbacks!

Now, back to "those Pines people."

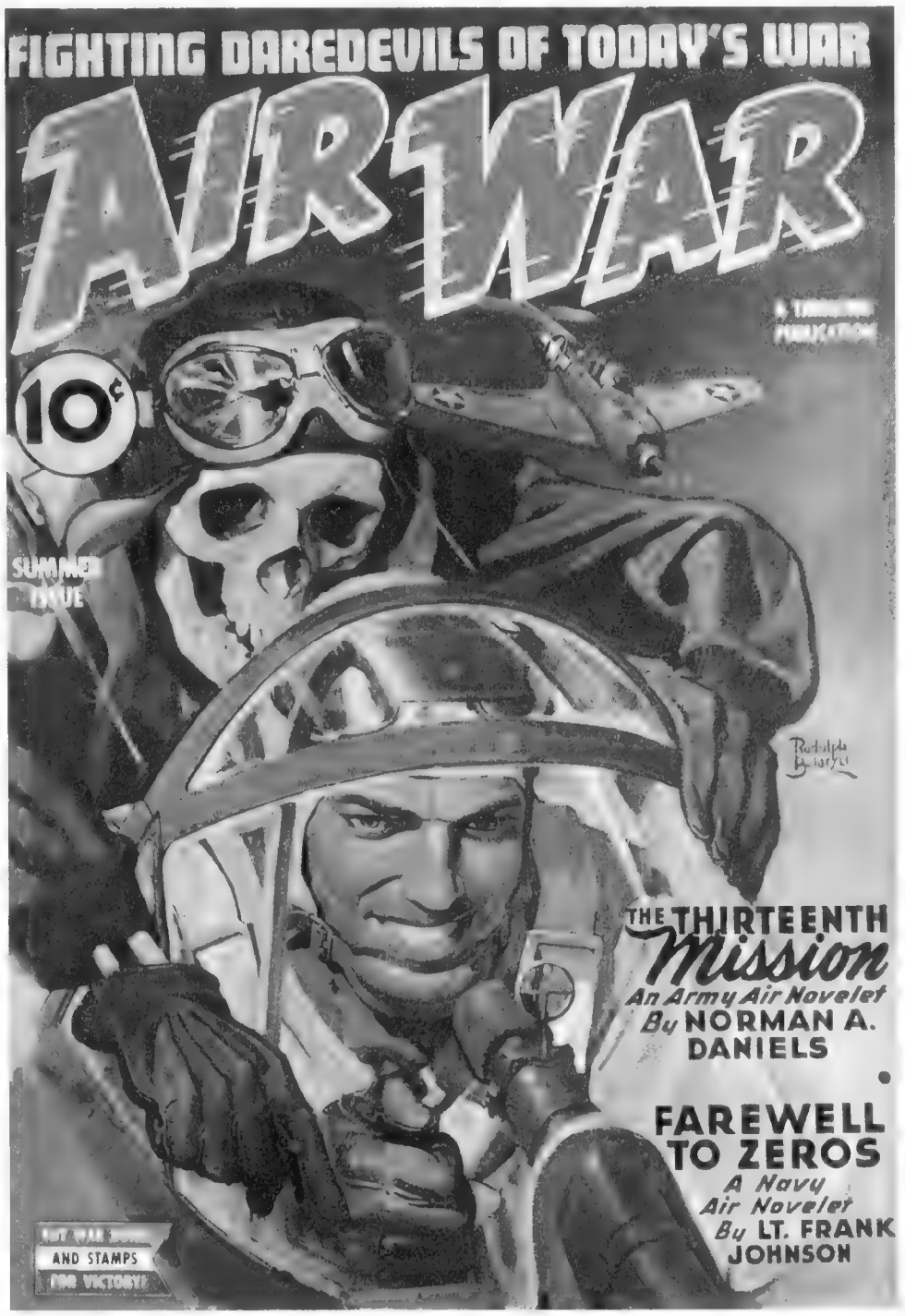
Pines published the staggering total of at least 3,503 pulps covering 71 titles from 1931 through 1958—not even counting turning out the soap opera-ish and non-collectible *Ranch Romances* for two decades after Pines acquired the title in 1950. For what it's worth, I've always placed *Ranch Romances* in a category of its own.

Pines published at least 1,822 pulps in the 1940s and an industry-leading 750 issues (at least) in the 1950s, when the pulp genre was virtually extinct in the minds of many! We won't be sure of the exact counts until the romance, sports and western pulps have been totally accounted for—I'm working on it!—but, nevertheless, these numbers are staggering when considering the company's output of comics and paperbacks during the same two periods.

The Pines paperback line, known as Popular Library and one of the most popular among collectors, produced at least 1,219 paperbacks from 1943-59 (and many more well into the 1970s). Meanwhile, the Pines comic book line, variously known as Better, Nedor and Standard, published no fewer than 1,173 issues from 1940-59.

The first two Pines comics were entitled *Best Comics* and were published late in 1939 in an odd oversized rectangular form, with a final pair of these sideways issues early in 1940, at the same time the company began producing standard-sized comics with the appearance of *Thrilling Comics* #1 (Jan 1940).

Just imagine—in the 20-year period ending in 1959, Pines produced the staggering total of nearly 5,000 pulps,



Rudolph Belarski is best known for his legion of detective covers, but he was also the master of the wartime aviation scene, such as this symbolic masterpiece for the Summer 1944 issue of **Air War**.

paperbacks and comics! Other companies also worked in all three genres, most notably Marvel (Timely), Dell and Ace, but nothing on the overall scale of Pines.

Yet virtually none of the Pines material remains in print today, except for the role Bill Black's AC Publications has played in reprinting some of the best Nedor comics stories, and the small number of largely fan-inspired pulp reprints. Even most of the relatively high-caliber science fiction material is gone, even though it was well edited by Pines editorial leader Leo Margulies, and also overseen for a few years in the late 1930s by Mort Weisinger, who was destined to achieve much more fame with Superman. All those millions upon millions of words, gone except in the libraries of collectors.

Marvel's Martin Goodman had small paperback lines in the 1950s and consistently published a fair number of pulps, but his company was primarily into comics and men's magazines (a "literary" genre rooted in the pulps and tabloids but distinctly different and of little interest to the majority of pulp collectors). Dell, of course, used contracts with Western Printing to become huge in paperbacks and comics, but Dell published relatively few pulps after the 1930s. And by the time Ace began its highly popular paperback line in 1952, the company had almost entirely left pulps and stayed in comics only through 1956.

Pines has become infamous among collectors for publishing covers that were far, far more exotic than the insides in all three areas of publishing, especially in paperbacks. In fact, unlike many other companies, the vast majority of the Pines paperbacks and pulps contained what today would be considered "R" material at worst and "PG" stories for the most part. Those Pines publications were infinitely racier on the outside than the inside, thanks to the insistence of the publisher and editors of placing nubile females in danger on so many of its publications.

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For example, perfectly dignified mysteries by the literary likes of Octavus Roy Cohen would be published with garish covers, many of them reprints from the Pines pulps.

Super-heroes such as Black Terror, Fighting Yank, Doc Strange and Captain Future—and, yes, Supermouse!—dominated the Pines comics in the 1940s. That wasn't surprising, since the Pines pulps were loaded with the likes of the Phantom Detective, the Black Bat and the Masked Detective. But the company's comics editors completely abandoned costumed heroes at the end of 1949 and successfully tried just about every other type of genre until the advent of the Comics Code. Pines published 374 comics in the 1950-53 period, according to comics historian Dan Stevenson, and not one of them contained a costumed hero.

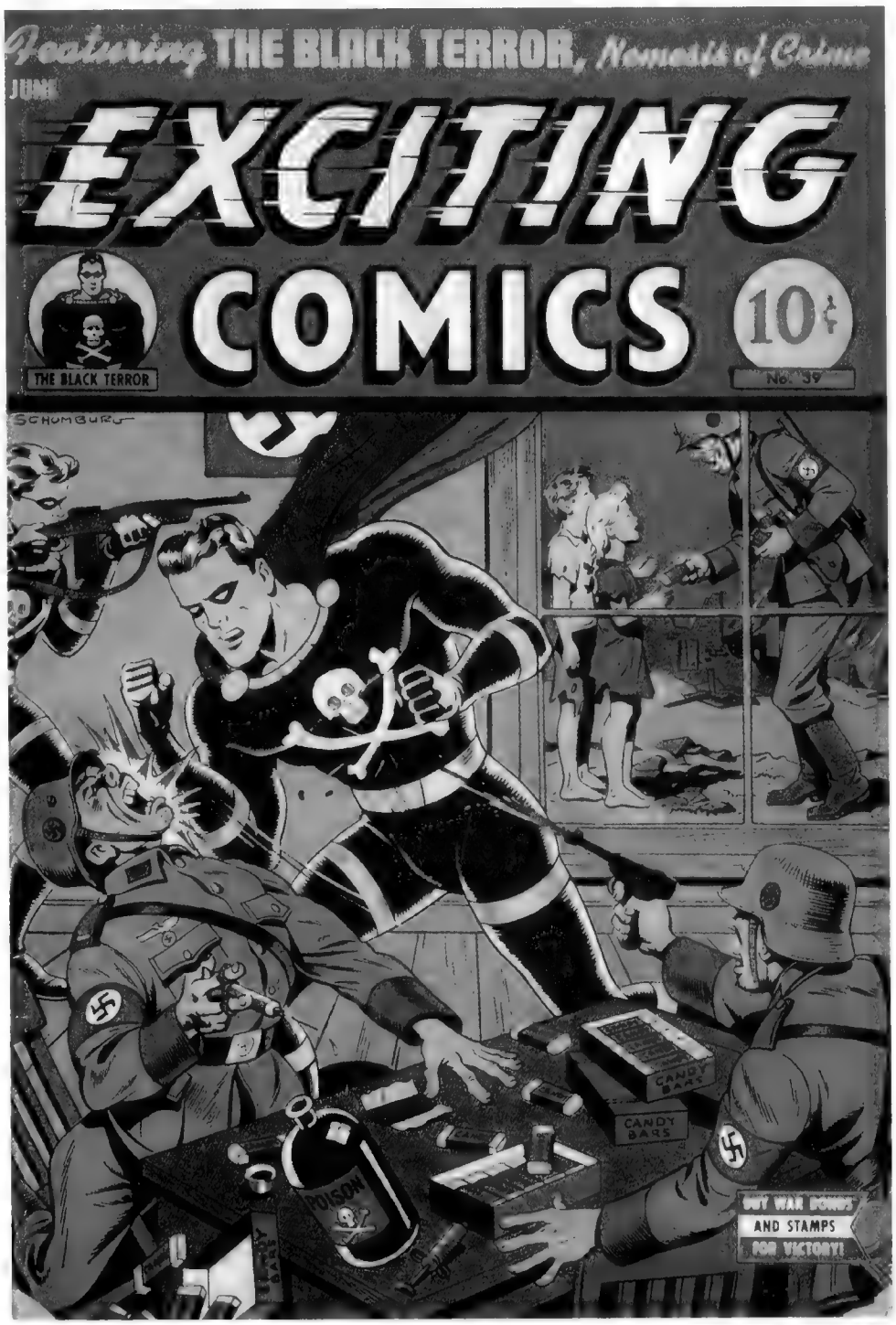
But by the time the Code seal began to appear on comics early in 1955, this once mighty comics publisher seemed pretty much out of the four-color field for one odd year. Except for its licensed *Dennis the Menace* title from the Post-Hall Newspaper Syndicate, all of the final nine Pines titles abruptly vanished by September 1954. Other than the bimonthly *Dennis the Menace*, Pines published exactly one other comic until September 1955—*Supermouse* #33 (Feb 1955). *Supermouse* was a cool enough comic in its own wacky way, but this gap really has to rank as one of the great comic mysteries of all time—why would Pines publish that one issue and nothing else besides *Dennis* for a year?

Pines published only 13 comics in 1955. There were six bi-monthly issues of *Dennis the Menace*—#8-13, which must have sold like crazy—and two *Dennis* giants with 1955 dates. The others were *Supermouse* #33 and 34 (Feb and Sep 1955), *Kathy* #17 (an inexplicable Sep 1955 one-shot after being cancelled for two years), *Little Angel* #6 (Sep 1955) and a *Mark Trail* one-shot (Oct 1955).

Pines embarked on a surprising comeback, though, by licensing Mighty Mouse and other Paul Terry cartoon characters in 1956. In fact, Pines published 40 comics in 1957 and 47 in 1958 before fading out with nine final issues in 1959. In doing so, Pines ironically went from men to mice—from being a leader in the super hero field in the 1940s to being the pace-setter in the super mouse category in the late 1950s.

Meanwhile, Pines published many of the pulp industry's last-gasp issues. But even the Pines pulps were gone by the end of 1955 except for *Texas Rangers* (which expired in Feb 1958), *Exciting Love* (Winter 1957-58) and *Triple Western* (Winter 1957-58), plus the aforementioned *Ranch Romances*, which lasted until the early 1970s.

The Pines company remained hardy enough to make a bundle on paperbacks into the 1970s. But by 1959, *Dennis the Menace* and *Ranch Romances* were all that remained of the other two branches of a company that for so long was thrilling, startling and exciting, indeed, not to mention highly popular.



Of all the artists who produced World War II comic book covers, none was better at inspiring a combination of awe and emotion than Alex Schomburg. He is at his peak with this infamous cover for **Exciting Comics** #39 (Jun 1945). This issue, with Nazis getting their comeuppance for injecting poison into candy for kids, hit the stands shortly before Germany surrendered.

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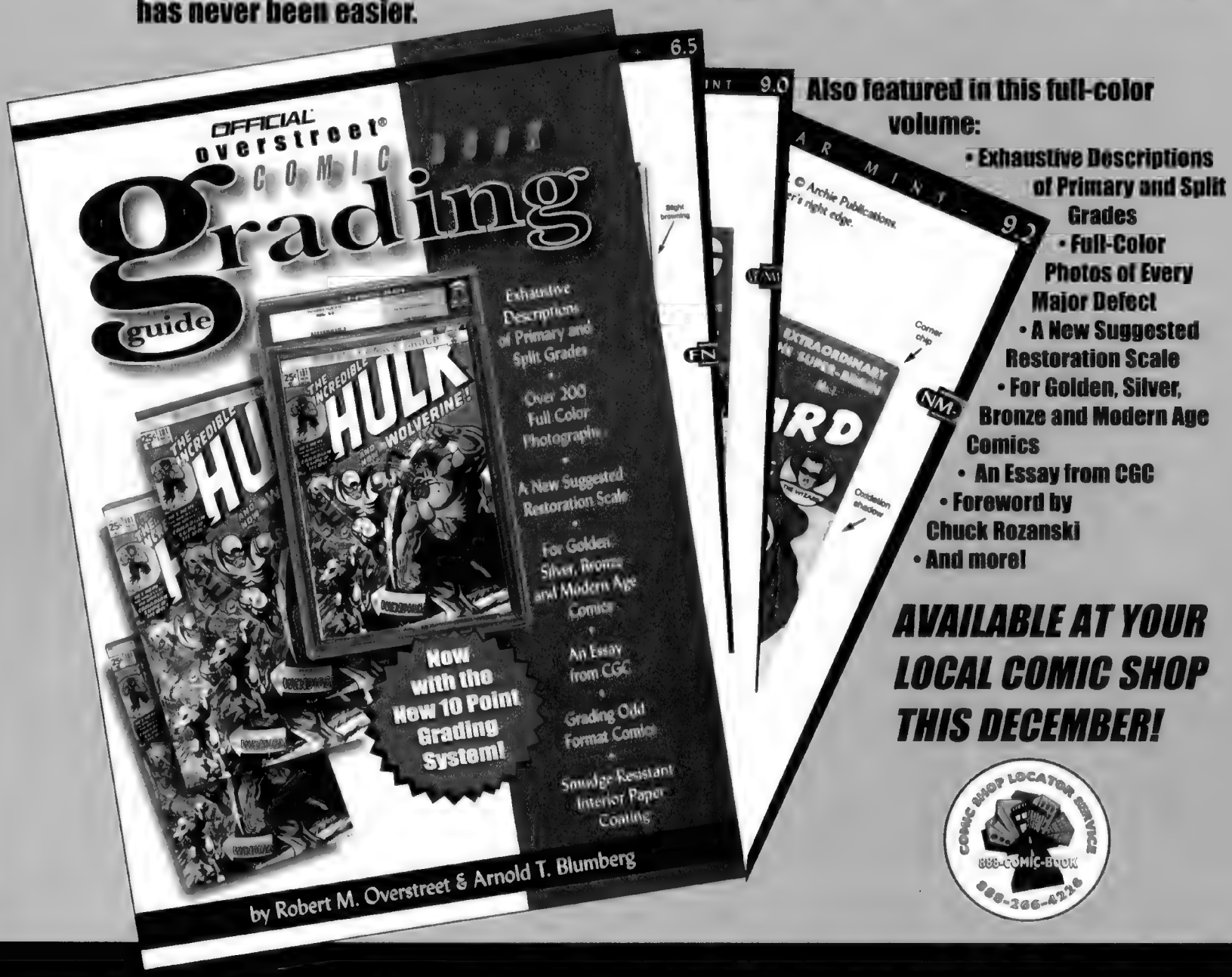

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Comic Strip Art
1942 Tarzan Sunday page hand-colored by Burne Hogarth.

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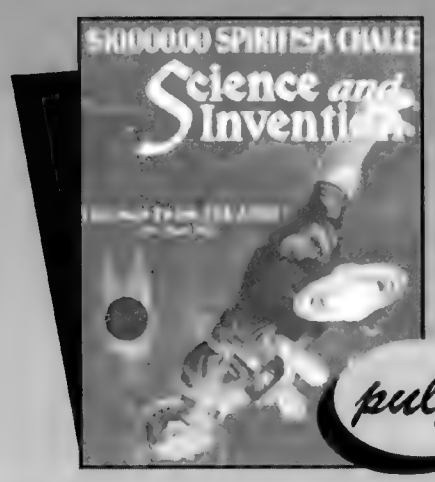
Comic Book Art
Jack Kirby's pencil recreation of Amazing Fantasy #15.



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Here, There Be the Dragon Lady

On *Terry and the Pirates*, Milton Caniff created a world that teemed with individual personalities, but none could match the formidable Dragon Lady. She was his supreme creation. Her name and face and personality have slipped into popular culture as emblematic of a beautiful but dangerous female of the species. Her sensual allure and threatening ruthlessness and tantalizingly ambiguous motivation combined in such a unique and potent a fictional personality that she will undoubtedly be the most enduring of Caniff's legacy in American culture and letters, a contribution easily the equal of Scarlett O'Hara or Hester Prynne or Lolita. Or, to invoke a creation of another kind, Mata Hari.

The Dragon Lady is the first villain Caniff created in the strip. A pirate queen, she ably commanded a small army of outlaws, filling the usual masculine role so thoroughly that her minions ignore her obvious feminine attractions and call her "Master." And in this unlikely occupation for a woman, she so fascinated Caniff that he returned to her again and again during the first several years of the strip, each time exploring some new facet of her personality.

To the stock femme fatale of melodrama, Caniff added two final and masterfully delicate touches: a note of doubt about her ruthlessness and the poignant suggestion that perhaps the Dragon Lady would rather be loved of men than lead them. The doubt about her hardness of heart is particularly evident in the Dragon Lady's later appearances in *Terry*. Although she always claims for her deeds only the most self-serving of motives, the effect of many of her intrigues is to do a good turn for the cause of humanity. And during World War II, she deliberately gives up banditry, putting her considerable skills as a military leader to use as chief of a guerrilla band that worked to frustrate the Japanese.

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What's more, we actually see her occasionally performing some act of kindness (which she is likely to do covertly, as if almost ashamed of it). Is she really humane beneath that snarling albeit beautiful exterior? Should we believe her claims to callous self-seeking? Or are those claims a facade, covering her real humanity in order to preserve her necessarily unyielding image as a leader of men?

Almost from the first, her interest in Pat Ryan seems more than that of a commander seeking a worthy lieutenant, which is what she claims for her pursuit of him. Does she, then, love Pat Ryan? Or, later (when he's grown up), Terry? Or is she, in those scenes in which she seems to reveal to them a secret affection, merely indulging herself during an idle moment in yet another exercise of power? Having proved her power as a leader of men, is she now just trying to prove her equally potent strength in the customary role of woman as enthralling charmer? Or does she regret the role she must play and secretly long to be enfolded in some strong hero's arms?

TELL ME, CANIFF, HOW CAN YOU ILLUSTRATE THE APPEAL OF THE COMIC STRIP SIMPLY BY BRINGING YOUR FRIENDS TO SEE THE DRAGON LADY ?
MILTON CANIFF

© CTNYN

The Dragon Lady is an imposing creation of fascinating complexity. Only about seemingly real people can we ask such questions as those I've been posing. About the Dragon Lady, we'll never know the answers for sure. Just as we can never know for sure about many people we meet in our own lives. But we'll believe what we choose to believe. This sort of ambiguity about a character is possible only when the personality drawn is complex—as well as fully and realistically rounded with many subtle strokes.

With such strokes, Caniff did more than make the Dragon Lady live. He gave to his woman of mystery a psychological depth that underscores the mysteriousness of her circumstances with the puzzle of her personality. And in the ambivalence of our judgment about her (a necessarily male judgment with yours truly) are the shadows of archetypal male longings and fears about women in general. Despite our ambivalence (or, indeed, perhaps because of it), the Dragon Lady seems profoundly real.

For Caniff, the Dragon Lady was more than a unique creation: she was the touchstone, the philosopher stone of his transformation into master storyteller, the lodestar that guided him to a new undertaking, the reagent that stimulated his creative powers. In shaping her personality over the first few months of the strip, Caniff reached a well-spring of his imagination, and from the resultant success with her—in the attention and acclaim of his readers as well as in his own satisfaction and delight in the character—much of the entire saga of *Terry* and of Caniff's subsequent career flowed.

Caniff discovered, virtually by chance, the potent value of characterization when he created the Dragon Lady. And though he realized at once her riveting potential as an individual character, he did not immediately apply the lessons inherent in her to other characters. Before he could work the same magic on others, he needed to explore the potency he felt was there by developing her further.

While in college, Caniff drew movie star portraits for the entertainment section of the Columbus Dispatch; here, his drawing of Jean Harlow, long before Burma came along.

Introduced on December 16, 1934, the second strip in the first Sunday sequence when the Sundays told a separate story from the dailies, the Dragon Lady appeared in all but one of the Sunday adventures thereafter until the Sunday and daily stories were at last merged in August 1936. And the first seven-day continuity, which ran until early February 1937, also featured her. By then, she—and her creator—were famous. She had been on stage almost continuously in the early *Terry* for most of the first 27 months of the strip's life. More than any other single factor (and there were others), the Dragon Lady was undoubtedly responsible for the strip's emergence in less than two years as one of the nation's most popular. Not only is she the key to Caniff's development as a storyteller: she is the banner around which his readers rallied.

Fascinated by the personality of the Dragon Lady, Caniff found, as he delved deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of her psyche, the dramatic appeal to him and to his readers of personality for its own sake—and for its influence upon events. Having made this discovery, he would perform the same sort of psychological examination and revelation with every secondary character he introduced into his tale, and in this way, he demonstrated convincingly the importance of character development in adventure stories. He showed that characterization could be integral in creating and maintaining the suspense so vital to the genre. It also created dedicated and enthusiastic readers. Caniff's adventure stories were, thereafter, never just adventure stories, never just tales of action and danger; they were also dramas of human personality, of good intentions and bad and of plans gone awry and then righted because of the personalities of the principals. It was Caniff's signal achievement as a cartoonist. And it started, I believe, with the Dragon Lady.

As I've said before (in the pages of the quarterly *Caniffites Journal*, where several of us—Carl Horak and Elton Dorval and Bob Bindig and Shel Dorf and others of a similar bent towards dogged devotion—meet regularly to admire the master cartoonist's work—just $20/year for four

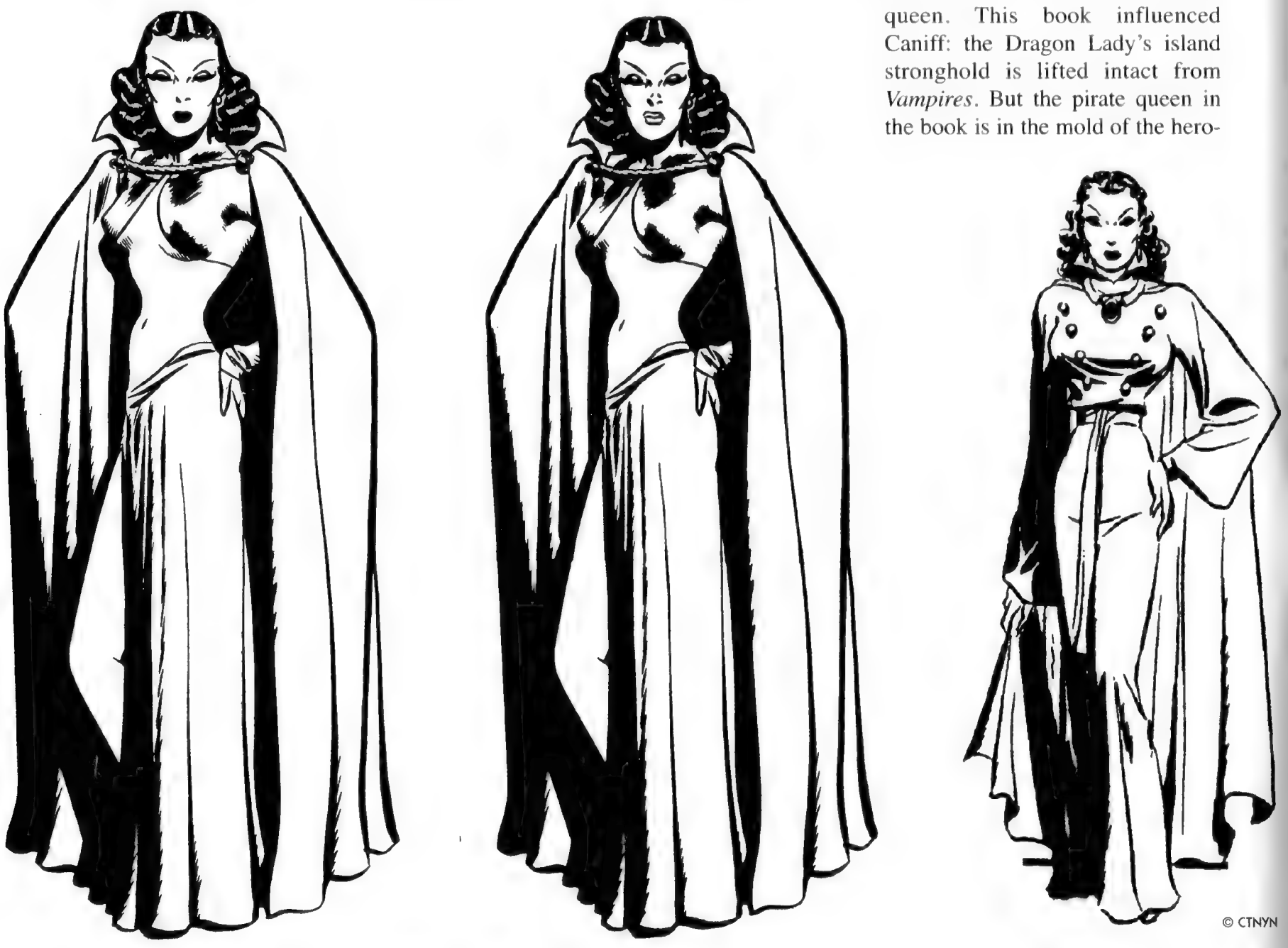
issues, SPEC Publications, PO Box 32, Manitou Springs, CO 80829-0632), Caniff often claimed that his initial inspiration for the Dragon Lady was Joan Crawford. Crawford wore a cape with a high collar in some 1930s movie Caniff had seen, and he adopted that guise for the Dragon Lady. But in the earliest pictures of the Dragon Lady in the strip, she isn't wearing a cape with a high collar. She doesn't don that kind of garb until the summer of 1936, when she kidnaps Pat and sells him into slavery to Papa Pyzon. And that was quite some time after the Dragon Lady was invented. So I don't think Joan Crawford was the inspiration. For the costume, maybe; but not for the character.

In fact, the Dragon Lady at her debut looks like Hedy Lamarr; but I don't see how the toothsome Hedy, oft touted as "the world's most beautiful woman," could have been the inspiration either. Although the actress later acquired notoriety for a nude scene in a 1933 movie called *Ecstasy*, that was in Germany. She didn't make her first movie in this country until 1938. It's unlikely Caniff would have seen any of her European films.

No, I suspect that at the very first, the Dragon Lady wasn't modeled after any actual personage. She was, rather, just Caniff's idea of what a beautiful Chinese woman would look like. Later, Caniff would harken back to Joan Crawford in her role as Sadie Thompson in the movie *Rain* when he created Burma. And with Burma, he was also thinking of Jean Harlow, the original "blonde bombshell," and of a friend of his wife's named Wilda Brennan. But Crawford wasn't high in his consciousness when the Dragon Lady first bowed onto Caniff's stage in December 1934.

As for the concept of the pirate queen, she is undoubtedly based upon a recommendation from Captain Joseph Patterson, honcho of the *New York Daily News* and of the syndicate bearing that name jointly with the *Chicago Tribune*, who, according to the Caniff Legend, had summoned the young cartoonist into his lair to create an adventure strip in the fall of 1934. He didn't give Caniff the character's name, but he suggested that he put a female pirate into the strip. And he suggested at least one book about piracy in the China Sea that Caniff should consult—*Vampires of the China Coast*.

In that book, a young Chinese woman marries a pirate, and when the pirate is killed on a raid, she assumes the chieftaincy of his band, thus becoming a pirate queen. This book influenced Caniff: the Dragon Lady's island stronghold is lifted intact from *Vampires*. But the pirate queen in the book is in the mold of the hero-



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ines of Victorian novels: with the softly evocative name Moonshadow, she is a fluttery and utterly feminine character, a far cry from the inscrutable personality of Caniff's Dragon Lady. Whatever Caniff took from *Vampires*, he found the Dragon Lady's personality somewhere else, probably deep within his own psyche.

"We all have these wet-dream characters," he told me. "If you don't have, there's something wrong with you. That's how you deal with those inhibitions. But—my God," he continued, chuckling, "I never want ever to meet such a person as this! Only in my dreams. Thank heavens! I'd be scared to death if I ever met her."

And where did Patterson get the idea for a pirate queen? He suggested that Caniff set his new strip in China because (as he is reported as saying) "adventure can still happen out there." Certainly, China was in the news with some regularity in the 1930s, and Patterson, a renowned hands-on newspaper publisher, obviously kept up on the news. There was a lot of disturbance in China—roving bands of warlords, threatening Japanese hordes up north, and so forth. "Adventure" could, indeed, still happen out there.

But Patterson may have had an even more compelling reason to suggest China, a reason that probably accounted for his interest in the place to begin with. As a youth, he had been sent to China as an aide to a Hearst reporter covering the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. What he saw there surely impressed itself upon him; he could scarcely have forgotten the massed grandeur of the army the white colonial powers sent inland to rescue their representatives in Peking.

If, then, China had a special place in Patterson's pantheon of places and events, he would probably print more stories about the glamorous aspects of this "adventurous" venue in his paper than he might if driven by news alone.

(far left to near right) The classic Dragon Lady promotional drawing; it circulated everywhere in the early days of the strip.

Years after leaving **Terry**, Caniff redrew the face of the Dragon Lady in her classic pose, giving her a somewhat more realistic physiognomy.

From early 1936, the Dragon Lady as she appears when she takes Terry, Pat, and Connie to her island redoubt.

From late 1936, is the Dragon Lady in her Joan Crawford get-up; even the hairdo is Crawfordian.

By the end of the 1930s, the Dragon Lady could be military . . .

. . . or casually attired in Occidental garb.

And when, during the War, the Dragon Lady gave up piracy to lead a guerrilla band against the Japanese, she was all army.

He might have been more than ordinarily intrigued by a book review he'd seen in his cousin's paper, the *Chicago Tribune*. Written by Edith Weigle and published July 27, 1931, the article reports on Aleko E. Lilius' *I Sailed with Chinese Pirates* (Arrowsmith, 1930). In that book, Weigle says, is a "famous woman pirate," a real life pirate queen, a scruffy wizened old woman (if we are to judge by the photograph in the book and in the *Tribune*) who was called Lai Choi San. "Mountain of Wealth." And this, as aficionados of Caniff's work know, is the name Caniff gave to his pirate queen when she was first introduced in the strip.

Lai Choi San's well-known nom de guerre is introduced very informally in the strip—with none of the dramatic fan-fare we might expect for so apt an appellation for an Oriental villainess. On the Sunday page for January 6, 1935, Pat Ryan refers to her as "the dragon lady" in much the same way as he might say "the pirate lady"—or, in a subsequent reference, "homicide Hattie." Despite the seeming off-handedness of this christening, the Dragon Lady's crew members are calling her "the Dragon Lady" immediately after Pat first mentions the name. But he's the first to use it—and so casually as to suggest that Caniff hadn't invented her Occidental nickname until he happened upon it as he penned the strip's dialogue and realized at once its potent appropriateness.

Caniff was often asked to draw the Dragon Lady long after he left **Terry**.

The pirate queen's Chinese name, on the other hand, may have been supplied by Patterson, directly or indirectly. Patterson could have clipped Weigle's article and filed it and let Caniff borrow the file while he was inventing the strip. Or he could have simply suggested the name to the young cartoonist. Or Caniff, ravaging the New York Public Library for books on the Orient, could have turned up Lilius' book. Or Patterson could have recommended it to him along with the Moonshadow volume. Caniff, when I asked him about it, had the impression that he'd found the name in a book, so perhaps the last of the alternatives I've suggested is the actual situation.

does this mean Patterson invented the Dragon Lady? Well, yes and no. In a 1937 issue of *Quill*, the magazine for Sigma Delta Chi, the professional journalism society, is an article written by Caniff about the creation of the Dragon Lady. In it, he asserts that he created her, almost by accident, without much thought or deliberation.

"Heroism cannot thrive without rascality," Caniff wrote. "Slinky, oily Malayans and sundry other Eastern types had been standard for years. Why not twist it a bit and make the Number One Menace a woman? One who combines all the best features of past mustache twirlers with the lure of a handsome wench. There was a woman pirate along the China coast at one time, so it wasn't beyond reality. She's fabulously wealthy. Lai Choi San means 'Mountain of Wealth.' That's too much for readers to remember. Call her that once to establish the atmosphere, but the Occidentals have nicknamed her The Dragon Lady."

The article was written three years after the fact. By this time, the Dragon Lady had made Caniff famous. And his recollection of the actual circumstances surrounding her birth may have become clouded. He may not have remembered that Patterson suggested a pirate queen character. Or if he remembered it, he may have thought it such an off-hand remark by the Captain that it scarcely registered as an actual suggestion. Besides, his Dragon Lady bore no resemblance to either Moonshadow or that wrinkled old woman on a sampan in the photograph in Lilius's book.

As we've seen, Patterson is credited for the strip's distinctive locale in every recounting Caniff made of his historic first meeting with the publisher. And he also always said that the Captain gave him the idea for the boy-mentor combination that Terry and Pat Ryan embodied. "Give the kid a grown-up mentor, a rough-and-ready soldier of fortune type to handle the rough stuff and to

The Dragon Lady's namesake, Lai Choi San, as she appears in the book, **I Sailed with Chinese Pirates**.

romance the ladies," Caniff often quoted Patterson as saying.

Why did Caniff do that?

The mentor-youth relationship Caniff had already established in *Dickie Dare*, so Patterson could hardly have invented it. So why did Caniff credit Patterson for it?

I think it was Caniff's way of acknowledging Patterson's role in the creation of the Dragon Lady. A sort of backhanded recognition.

Either consciously or, more likely, unconsciously, Caniff reversed the situation and the roles here. He re-arranged history slightly, giving himself full credit for his most remarked-upon creation, the Dragon Lady; and he compensated for his appropriation of her (or assuaged his guilty conscience) by giving Patterson credit for Terry and Pat. I suspect that Caniff didn't, after a time (and maybe even from the very first), realize that's what he was doing. It may, in fact, have been entirely unconscious, his psyche working out a moral dilemma without his consciousness even knowing. A small constellation of related factoids seems to bear me out.

A letter I unearthed from Mollie Slott, Patterson's syndicate factotum, clearly cites Patterson for creating the pirate queen. This letter was written to Caniff in 1950 just after the cartoonist appeared on the cover of *Newsweek* for April 24.

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Slott says Caniff came to see Patterson in the spring or summer of 1934 and showed him some strips. Patterson didn't want to see Caniff, but Slott insisted that he give the material a look. So the Captain looked at it. He seemed to like what he saw but suggested, casually, that Caniff put a lady pirate in as the villain. Caniff, of course, went off and did just that.

Caniff's account of the creation of his most acclaimed strip and his initial encounter with Patterson is quite different. According to Caniff, he got a phone call from Mollie Slott, quite out of the blue—absolutely unheralded. So he went to see the Captain, and Patterson offered him a berth with the Tribune-News Syndicate, outlining at the same time his concept for the new kind of comic strip—kid hero, mentor companion, treasure map in China ("adventure can still happen out there"), and so forth. Then Caniff created *Terry* over the next weekend.

Later, Caniff, in rehearsing this tale, nodded to Mollie Slott by saying that she was the one who urged Patterson to contact him when she saw that the Captain was looking for an adventure strip to add to the syndicate line-up. Her boys, Caniff always said, read *Dickie Dare* and liked it, and Slott kept clippings of the strip in her desk drawer, awaiting the right moment to show them to Patterson. Which she apparently did, and Patterson told her to phone Caniff right away.

In his treatment of Slott's role here we see the same sort of compensatory mental gymnastics going on as I think occur in Caniff's Dragon Lady origin story. Caniff gives Slott credit for something very like what she actually did—but not exactly. And I think the same thing happened with the Dragon Lady and Patterson. Caniff altered actual history somewhat to suit his romantic notion of how things ought to be. Caniff wasn't the only entertainer to do this sort of thing. In those days, every Hollywood star had a fabricated biography that served to

In comparison to Lai Choi San—well, there is no comparison.

FATALIST

YOU SEEM TO HAVE NO CONCERN ABOUT YOUR FATE!—YOU ARE UTTERLY IN MY POWER!—I COULD SNUFF OUT YOUR LIFE IN A MOMENT!
WHY MOPE ABOUT IT?—THE REASON A MAN IS KEPT IN THE DEATH HOUSE IS TO BUILD UP THE HORROR OF THE EXECUTION!—DO YOUR WORST! WHO CARES!
10-23
THE GENTLEMAN HAS ABSORBED THE CHINESE PHILOSOPHY ON DEATH!
WHY NOT?—I'M NOT MUCH GOOD TO ANYONE!—I'VE FAILED AT EVERTHING WORTHWHILE I'VE EVER TRIED!
DON'T THINK I'M GETTING MORBID!—I'D SHOOT MY WAY OUT OF HERE IF I HAD A CHANCE!—BUT NO ONE EXCEPT TERRY AND CONNIE WOULD MISS ME MUCH IF I GOT BUMPED OFF...
... AND NOW THAT I'VE MADE MY SPEECH I THINK I'LL BE GOOD AND RUDE AND TAKE A SNOOZE! SOOTHE ME WITH A LULLABY, BABY!—FOR TOMORROW YOU'LL PROBABLY CUT MY THROAT...
MILTON CANIFF

THE MASK FALLS FOR THE BRIEFEST MOMENT

HE SLEEPS UPON MY KNEE AS PEACEFULLY AS A CHILD!—HOW LITTLE HE KNOWS OF MY REAL FEELINGS TOWARD HIM... IF I WERE NOT WHO I AM THINGS MIGHT BE SO DIFFERENT BETWEEN US!
10-24
HE WONDERS THAT I THREATEN TO KILL HIM—THEN NEVER QUITE DO SO! SOMETIMES I AM ALMOST AFRAID HE MAY LOOK AT ME WITH THOSE PIERCING EYES AND READ IN MY HEART THE WAY I ACTUALLY FEEL...
...BUT I HAVE TRAINED MYSELF WELL IN THE ROLE OF THE DRAGON LADY... HOW CALM HE IS.... ..."SLEEP DWELL UPON THINE EYES, PEACE IN THY BREAST! —WOULD I WERE SLEEP AND PEACE, SO SWEET TO REST!"
MILTON CANIFF

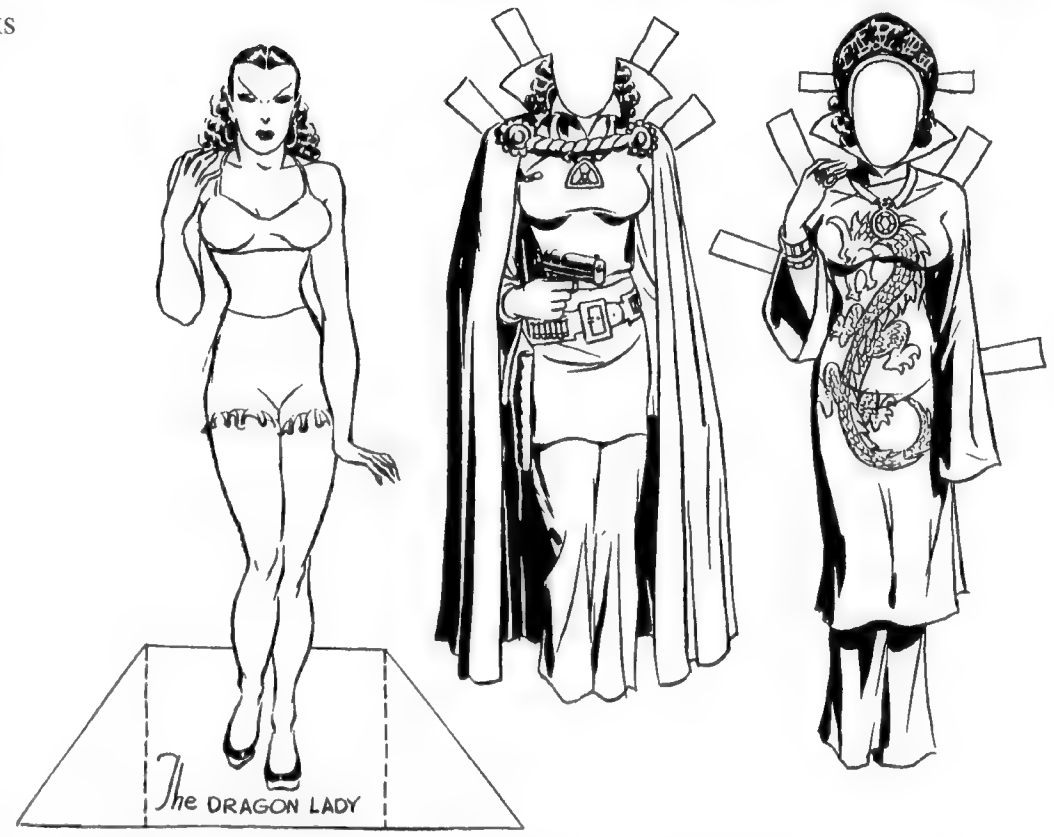
Two strips from late 1936; the Dragon Lady betrays a romantic interest in Pat Ryan—but not until he's asleep.

MEN OF CHINA!
YOU HAVE JUST RENOUNCED A LEADER WHO HAS PROVED HIMSELF A COWARD! THE DRAGON LADY SPEAKS TO YOU NOW!—GIVE EAR, THESE ARE IMPORTANT WORDS!...
...YOU WERE HELD TOGETHER AS BANDIT SOLDIERS BY KLANG—YOU PLUNDERED AND ROBBED BOTH SIDES ON THE FRINGE OF THE WAR .... BUT YOU DID THE GREATEST HARM TO YOUR OWN PEOPLE-WITH NO PROFIT TO YOURSELVES!..
NO ONE HAS EVER ACCUSED THE DRAGON LADY OF DRUM-BEATING PATRIOTICS-BUT AT THIS MOMENT THE SOIL OF CHINA IS BEING RAVISHED BY AN INVADING HORDE... IT IS NO MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS, BUT THE PRESERVATION OF YOUR RACIAL HERITAGE...
... I ENTREAT YOU, MEN OF WAR, TO FOLLOW ME-AND THROW YOUR SKILL AND BRAVERY AGAINST THE IRON HEEL OF THE FOREIGN TRANSGRESSOR! IF THE BLOOD OF GHENGIS KHAN STILL FLOWS IN YOUR VEINS ANSWER YES!
DLAGON LADY SPEAK TRUE WORDS!
SHE BLAVE LEADER! WE FOLLOW!
WE READY!
DLAGON LADY IS NEW MASTER!
4-2
DONE! THEN PREPARE TO MARCH! WE MOVE UP AT ONCE!
BOY, I GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU! YOU SURE SOLD THOSE GUYS A BILL OF GOODS!
CONNIE SO SUPLISED! NEVER KNOW DLAGON LADY CHINA PATLIOT!
DO NOT BE SO NAIVE, MY ERSTWHILE FRIENDS! THE DRAGON LADY HAS NOT CHANGED HER SCALES! —IF THE INVADER CONQUERS CHINA SUCH BANDITS AS I WILL BE WIPED OUT BY HIGHLY ORGANIZED MILITARY POLICE...I MUST FIGHT TO KEEP THE COUNTRY HELPLESS SO THAT I GET THE SPOILS OF WAR!
MILTON CANIFF
© CTNYN

1938, with Japan invading China from the north, the Dragon Lady turns guerrilla leader—but not, she says, a patriot

enhance the star's romantic image. Studio flacks worked full-time on such fictions. And Caniff was fully aware of such practices.

Dick Rockwell, Caniff's assistant for many years, told me once that Caniff thought of himself as the kid with ink on his fingers, dashing into the city room of the newspaper with a sheaf of drawings under his arm and being hired on the spot as a brilliant artist. Caniff was the hero of his own life. And he wasn't above re-constructing parts of his actual biography to fit a pre-conceived notion of what might make "good copy" in some promotional news article somewhere. And as far as Caniff was concerned, everything written about him or his characters was promotional copy: it heightened the strip's visibility, and, once visible, it might be purchased by yet another newspaper, increasing the list of subscribers.



Caniff, like many of his colleagues, drew paper dolls for Sunday funnies, and here, we can clothe the Dragon Lady as either a pirate chieftain or as a slinky Eurasian lounge lizard.

But Caniff's Dragon Lady story, while probably not literally true, is true to the spirit of the circumstances. Caniff did create the Dragon Lady. Patterson's suggestion, a casual comment offering up a naked fact ("put in a lady pirate"), would scarcely have produced the complex character of the Dragon Lady if Caniff were not a skilled storyteller and acute observer of human nature in his own right. And he was all of that. And he created this complex personality, taking a hint from Patterson's suggestion and elaborating upon it endlessly.

So Caniff's re-arranging of actual events to make a good story is not the same as fabricating the whole situation; his version retains the essence of what happened—namely, that he created this complex character. But unconsciously, he tweaked events so as to credit Patterson with something even if it wasn't the actual contribution that Patterson made.

Even had he been conscious of his compensatory machination, Caniff would recognize at once that the actual facts comprised a story much too complicated to be told as briefly as the demands of publicity required. His way, whether conscious or not, was clearly the best way to achieve the purposes he had in mind. And those, I believe—having met and talked at length with the man—were not self-aggrandizement in any way. His purpose was simply to generate the kind of publicity that would promote the circulation of the strip.

Caniff was, in addition to being a creative genius, a practical one, and as a pragmatist, he realized that he was a salesman, whether selling a product or his skill or pitching a story or attracting and holding readership. His role as a newspaper cartoonist, as he often said, was to sell tomorrow's paper. The buyer already has today's paper.

And next time, if the ink stopper doesn't fall off the edge of the table and create a rug stain that can't be removed except by applying the Secret Method (scissors), we'll ponder something entirely different. As usual.

One of Caniff's latter-day reincarnations of the Dragon Lady for fans.

© CTNYN

BOOK REVIEWS BY PAUL GRAVATT

Never one for boastful pride nor false modesty, Milton Caniff (1907-1988) would usually tell people that he saw himself as "an entertainer" first and foremost, whose role was "to force the customer to buy tomorrow's newspaper." The "customer" wasn't the kids, they didn't buy the paper; "I'm interested in pleasing their daddies." As Caniff explained to Will Eisner in a 1982 'shop talk,' he and his contemporaries had few illusions that they were creating art or literature. They used to think of their daily strips and Sunday pages as "a communication form rather than an art form," a chance to shoot for "a provable mass audience" with the incentive of "being paid on a percentage basis, based on circulation." The more papers you sell in, the more you earn, and it was seriously hard work, but he saw it as more than just making a living, it was "satisfying...to have a platform" and "trying to say something" and at least it was never boring. "You do the best job, and you do it today. Let the future take care of itself."

Still, Caniff did have his eye on the future, and on the past. He understood the significance of his achievements in the newspaper comic strip field and throughout his life strove to raise its status and recognition, for example by helping to found both the National Cartoonists Society and the Newspaper Comics Advisory Council, by being a spokesperson and ambassador for the profession and by setting a shining example of asking for, and getting, complete control and ownership of his creation Steve Canyon. He also acted to ensure that all his records and archives of the past, "from the nipple to now," would be looked after by entrusting them to his old university, Ohio State, home to America's dedicated Cartoon Research Library, which since 1979 houses The Milton Caniff Research Room. He was looking ahead to the future.

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MILTON CANIFF: CONVERSATIONS

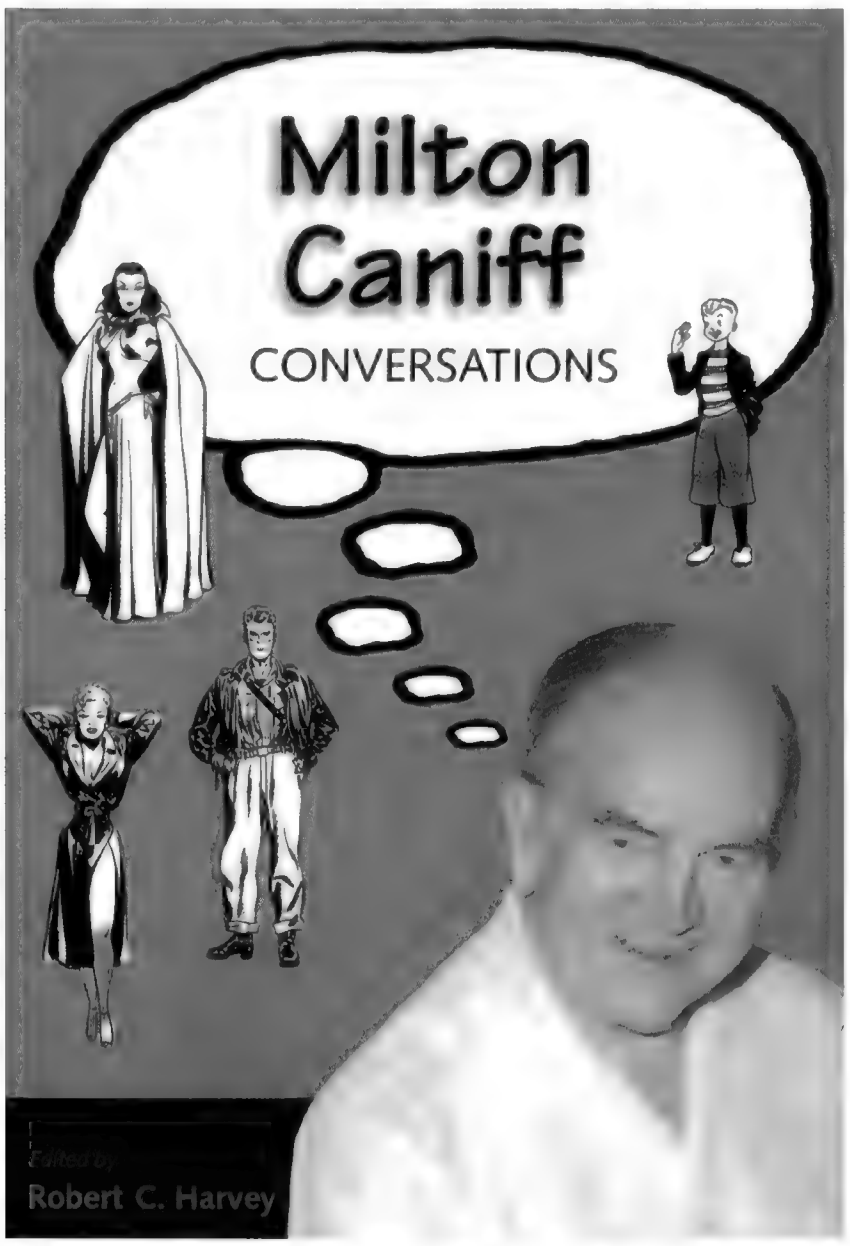
EDITED BY ROBERT C. HARVEY

He also had the foresight to appoint an official biographer, the distinguished comics historian and regular *CBM* columnist Robert C. Harvey. While we eagerly await his "definitive biography," Harvey has given us almost the next best thing by gathering eighteen of the best interviews he found during his five years of research and editing them into *Milton Caniff: Conversations*. Here is the man in his own words, forthright, funny and revealing, talking from 1937 to 1986, through almost his entire career on *Terry and the Pirates* (1934-1946) and *Steve Canyon* (1947-1988). Some of the "conversations" take the conventional question and answer format, others are journalistic profiles sprinkled with quotes, while one is a short commentary by Caniff and the final entry is a moving tribute by his long-time art assistant, Richard Rockwell (and yes, he was Norman Rockwell's nephew). I felt spoilt for choice among all these great anecdotes and memories.

Here is Caniff as an up-and-coming, thirty-something Sigma Chi fraternity brother, driving out to Long Island in 1937 with other "Sigs" Chester Cleveland and pals to interview another famous, slightly older "Significant Sig," cartoonist Fontaine Fox of *Toonerville Folks* fame. When they arrive half an hour too early, young Milt, himself squeezing time away from the constant deadlines of his Terry strip, is only too aware of how precious every minute could be for a daily cartoonist like Fox, for whom "every moment of the all too short day must be budgeted...Mr. Fox has no choice other than to budget, budget, budget his time all day long." Milt insists they adjourn to a tavern so they can arrive on time. Not surprisingly, from this his fellow "Sigs" immediately nickname Milt "Budge," or "Budget." In fact, Fox turns out to be perfectly unflustered, but this incident does tell us about Caniff's own feelings about the deadline pressures, feelings that never completely left him. In later chatty correspondence with Cleveland, we learn about his tastes in cigarettes (Old Golds, his fatal addiction), books (often read to him by his wife while he is "toying with my paper dolls"), plays (Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is singled out) and movie stars ("Pearl White and Helen Holmes are really my all-time loves...Real Emotion."). Harvey also notes how Caniff cannily cultivated his fraternity brethren, who numbered several newspaper editors who were likely buyers of a strip by a fraternity brother. Brothers help brothers.

In 1944, as *Terry* approached its tenth anniversary, Caniff was profiled by *The New Yorker* no less, a sign of definitely having arrived. By then, the Caniffs were renting "a large modernistic house" in several acres, designed by the painter Henry Poor with playwrights Maxwell Anderson, John Houseman and Kurt Weill for neighbors. But, as John Bainbridge recounts, Caniff "is too busy to have much chance to enjoy his possessions." Bainbridge reports that, even putting in fifteen hours a day and using assistants on *Terry*, Caniff, a stickler for detail and research, has managed to meet the syndicate deadlines, which demand dailies four weeks in advance of publication and Sunday pages nine weeks ahead, only "twice in the nine years the contract has run." Actually, as another writer, Austin Stevens, later calculates, Caniff was averaging four drawings every Monday to Saturday, another eleven for the Sunday page, 35 per week, that's 1,820 per year. The profile also includes a fascinating account of *Chicago Tribune-New York News* publisher Captain Joseph Patterson's specifications for the Terry strip, and his comment on how Caniff had successfully evolved it over the years from a comic strip into a "romantic and dramatic continued serial."

Bainbridge also records the historic reading into the *Congressional Record* of Flip Corkin's speech to Terry in the Sunday page monologue when Terry wins his wings in the Air Force in October 1943. It can be no coincidence that earlier that year Caniff had failed his physical, twice, due to his phlebitis and was classified 4-F. Bainbridge mentions this, but I wanted to know how Caniff felt about his bad leg keeping him out of the fighting. This is only disclosed in this book much later. In 1979, for example, he confesses to Austin Stevens in *Yankee*, "Not being in the service put me in an awkward position. I couldn't speak with the same authority as, say, Bill Mauldin. I couldn't form the same kinds of personal statements he was free to make. It could too easily be said, 'What does he know.' " When pressed in a 1982 feature "Homefront Commando," appropriately in *Airman*, Caniff admits that his patriotic strips had helped him cope with his "home-front neurosis." "There was a slight tinge of guilt, because being in the military was something I had always wanted to do....Fortunately, the strips have allowed me to have this close association with the military." He served his country through his comics. As well as sharing Terry's training and pilot experiences through the strip, almost living them vicariously, Caniff also did his duty by drawing without pay his *Male Call* starring Miss Lace, a weekly morale and libido booster for the troops published in the greatest number of individual publications of any comic strip.



Among further little-seen Forties coverage gleaned by Harvey is Marcia Winn's 1945 visit to the studio of this "blue-eyed, black-haired Irishman." I appreciated her observations of his working methods (on "three drawing boards," he "writes with his right hand and draws, paints, and prints with his left") and the decor ("on the mantel rest[s]...a wicked curved blade used for cutting brush in the South Pacific"), as well as more on the real life people who had inspired characters in the strip. In the industry bible *Editor and Publisher*, Helen Staunton a year later marked Miss Lace's return to her ink bottle and after feverish speculation followed up with the unveiling of Caniff's new strip, *Steve Canyon*, just under two months before it was due to start on January 13, 1947. As early as this, she confirms that 162 daily papers and 96 Sunday papers had already booked the new strip. The story was so big, it made the front cover of *Time* and an article excerpted here, which hails him as "the best tantalizer in the profession" and "a frustrated actor" who "has borrowed many a trick of stagecraft...to keep his audience on the edge of their chairs." This remark made me think how Caniff's love of acting, as a boy in walk-ons in silent movies, as a youth on stage, his consideration of the theatre as a career and his enjoyment of plays, must have informed his performances through his "puppets" acting on the printed page.

Other highlights included here are Jay Maeder's 1972 interview where Caniff has his eye keenly trained on innovators like Johnny Hart and Garry Trudeau, two interviews with Steve Canyon letterer Shel Dorf, Arn Saba's conversation for *The Comics Journal*, and Eisner's spirited "Shop Talk." I was intrigued to read what Caniff might have done with *Terry and the Pirates*, writing in a 1973 piece after George Wunder's continuation of the strip had been cancelled, when he felt able to talk about his ideas, such as: "a whooping confrontation between Big Stoop and the Dragon Lady"; "I planned to have Pat Ryan marry Burma"; and "a stateside story" in which "I was going to make a big thing of all these China Hands returning to the U.S. and showing how the picaresque hero from the Far Places does not always fare so well in the conventional surroundings back home." But this was just conjecture and there was a sadness about its ending, because, as he told Dorf, "...once it's dead, it's dead! You can't revive one of these things. That part I regret." No mention is made of the later attempted revival and updating that swiftly folded.

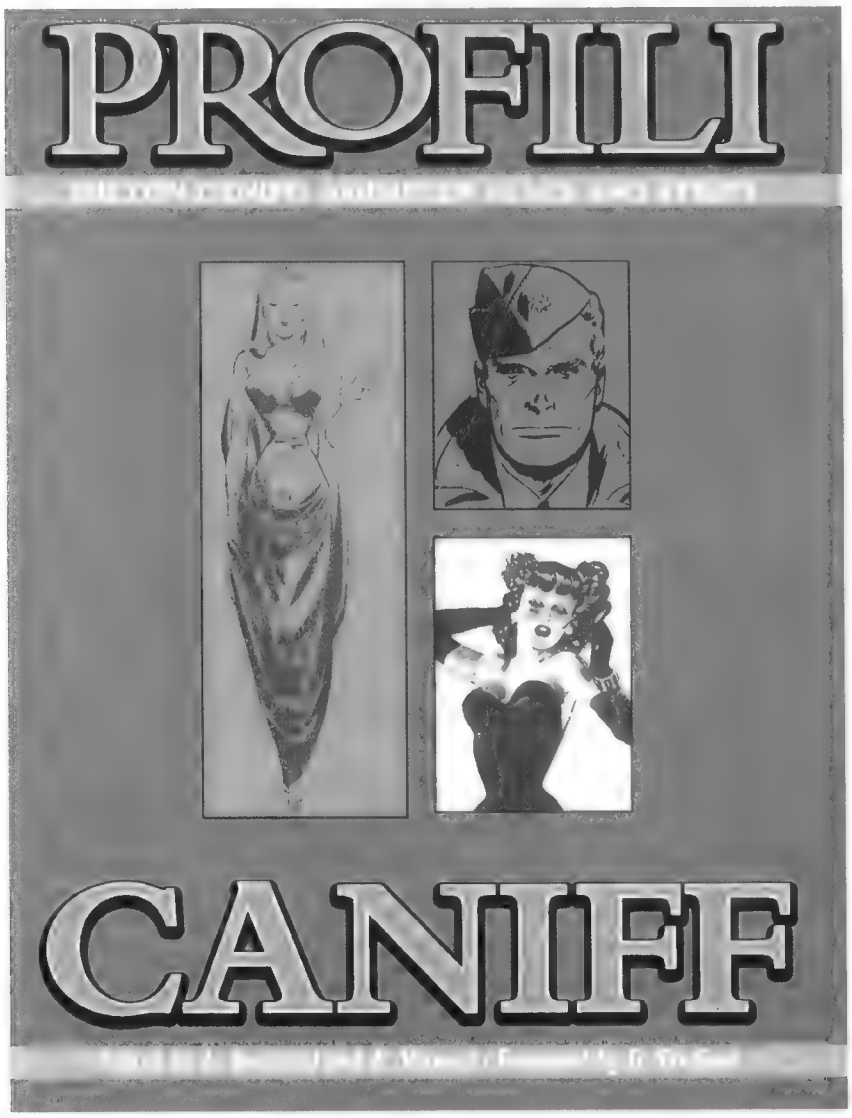
Harvey's choice for the final conversation is a particularly fruitful one from 1986 between Caniff and the strip and political cartoonist, *Spirit* scripter, screenwriter and children's book author Jules Feiffer, who talked for four-and-half hours about Caniff's oeuvre and numerous other classic strips and their cre-

University Press of Mississippi, 273 6x12 inch pages + introduction & chronology, $46 hardback
ISBN 1-57806-437-6, $18 paperback ISBN 1-57806-438-4

ators. Feiffer then distilled it all down to a Caniff monologue interspersed with his reflections. Ever since his seminal 1965 work, *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (whose essays have just been republished in book form by Fantagraphics Books), Feiffer has been one of America's most entertaining and astute analysts of the comics, writing from a passionate relationship to the works. For instance, he has no time for characters like Terry growing up. "The whole idea of cartoon characters is, or should be, to represent us in place, a better place than the place we now occupy; certainly a funnier, a more entertaining place." I love Feiffer summations like "Alex Raymond drew models, Caniff drew women, Crane drew gals and Will Eisner drew dames." Such wit, economy and pin-sharp perception. As he writes autobiographically, "One knew—even the eleven-year-old suspected—that a man—say, a very young man—could spend the night and that Burma would please him beyond his wildest dreams and that the Dragon Lady would please herself."

It was another of the greatest adventure strip artists, Noel Sickles, who shared a studio with Caniff and encouraged a greater realism to Caniff's artistic approach. The revolutionary style grew out of expediency. They both needed a way to draw faster than the old meticulous outlines and solid blacks. Caniff explained, "[Sickles] started fooling around with the chiaroscuro technique...developing an image with just lights and darks. Well, it worked. He figured out how to translate the approach to our strips. We used brushes on the shadow side of our drawing, grouping our blacks and then coming in with pen and ink on the light side. It was fast and that's what we needed, but it was also very effective." Feiffer is full of praise too for Sickles, but makes the crucial distinction, "...of the two, Caniff was the artist. Caniff was able to take all the elements that Sickles introduced, add story to them, add character to them, add cinematography, and out of the blend create a genuine full-bodied vision."

At 270 pages, counting Harvey's pertinent introduction and handy chronology, this book pieces together a spoken self-portrait, a treasure trove of insights. My favorite line of all in the book, one that made me laugh out loud, comes from Rockwell Kent's 1989 coda "Remembering Caniff," in which he bemoans the sorry fate of the story strips, shrunk to a row of talking heads. He brilliantly describes the challenge as "...like performing the opera in a subway car at rush hour"!



Glamour International Production, 144 6 1/4 x 8 1/4 inch pages (15 full color), $16.95 paperback

MILTON CANIFF: AMERICAN STARS AND STRIPES
EDITED BY ALBERTO BECATTINI AND ANTONIO VIANOVI
FOREWORD BY GRAZIANO FREDIANI

The 144 pages of *Milton Caniff: American Stars and Strips* make a perfect complement to Harvey's resource by presenting a wide-ranging selection of rare and significant imagery, Becattini's concise career overview and his detailed 27-page checklist encompassing practically all of Caniff's cartoons and illustrations from the Twenties, all of his strips, comic books, books, fanzines, advertising, TV series and a selected bibliography. The color section includes thirteen little-seen story illustrations circa 1929 and ten of the advertising comics by "Paul Arthur" (Caniff's and Sickles' joint pseudonym) shown in color. Regarding Caniff's legacy, Becattini comes to the same conclusion as Feiffer: "As far as storytelling is concerned, though, Sickles doesn't hold a candle to Caniff. Sickles never really loved the comics medium, whereas Caniff was the quintessential comic artist, able to create a perfect blend of adventure, romance, suspense and comedy through a masterful use of sequential art." As Becatini points out *Scorchy Smith* ran in only a limited number of papers for less than three years, so that although "it was Noel Sickles who introduced a new style of drawing to comics, no one can deny that his graphic approach would not have been so influential if it had not been popularized by Milton Caniff." Both of these valuable studies confirm how much Caniff achieved and inspired, while selling tomorrow's newspaper.

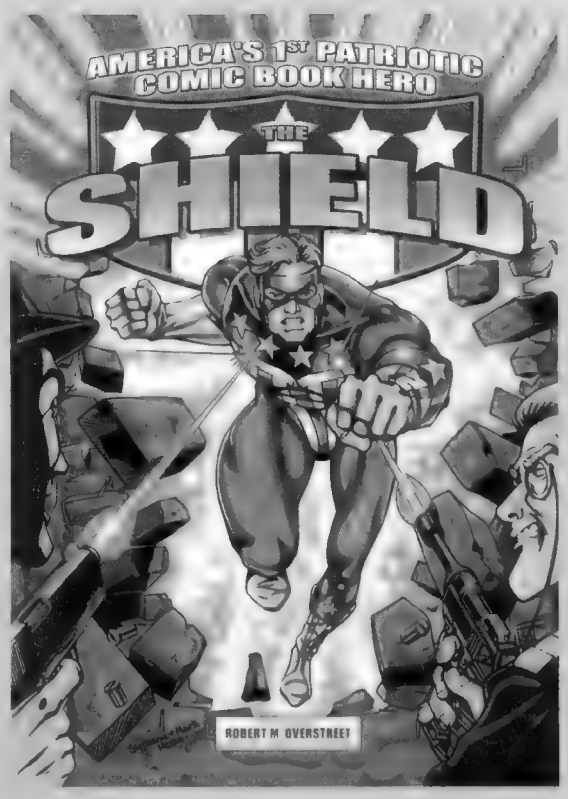
THE SHIELD

Get ready to curl up and spend an afternoon fighting the foes of freedom and protecting democracy with the world's first-ever super-patriot, The Shield. If somehow you've missed it, Archie Comics recently (finally!) released a trade paperback collection entitled, *America's First Patriotic Comic Book Hero, THE SHIELD* (Archie Comic Publications, $12.95, 96 pages).

Yes, The Shield made his debut on comic stands in January 1940, over a year before the most well known of the super-patriots, Captain America, came to light. With a foreword by Gemstone's own Robert M. Overstreet and an introduction from editor and Archie Comics historian Paul Castiglia, this collection follows The Shield from January to the summer of 1940.

"The Shield, who debuted in the pages of *Pep Comics* #1, was not only the first patriotic hero to spring from the imaginations residing at MLJ Magazines (as Archie's parent company was then known), he was the first purely patriotic super-hero to appear in comic books anywhere. The issue also featured The Comet by Jack Cole, The Queen of Diamonds & Kayo Ward, The Rocket, The Press Guardian, Sergeant Boyle, Fu Chang and Bentley of Scotland Yard. If you don't believe me, check out *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. To remember all of those back-up features, I sure had to! But I didn't need any help remembering The Shield," Bob Overstreet wrote in his foreword to this great new collection.

"I've been fortunate enough to see a number of collections with extra special copies of these titles, but collectors who get complete runs of these books rarely part with them. I've also seen the other great collected editions that the Archie folks have published, like their wonderful *Archie Americana Series* featuring the 'Best of' specific decades or *Josie and the Pussycats*. (I heartily recommend them all to any enthusiast or comics historian.) In my years and years of researching, interacting with fellow fans, and documenting the history of comics, one of the things I've heard with increasing frequency from serious collectors is a strong demand for a collection of Shield stories," he added.



There are lots of other great Golden Age characters deserving this kind of treatment, and we'd definitely like to see more of The Shield, too, but this book is a superb step in the right direction.

The Shield G-Man Club

While many collectors have indeed recognized The Shield as the first patriotic super-hero, a large portion of fandom might not realize The Shield G-Man Club ran from 1941 until 1948. The Shield G-Man Club was first advertised in *Pep Comics* #15. It offered a red, white and blue badge and membership card in exchange for a 2¢ stamp (those were the days!). Unlike other such clubs, U.S. Jones' for example, which concentrated on homeland defense, The Shield's club theme was more geared to crime fighting and it encouraged members to write in with their law enforcement experiences.

RETURNS!

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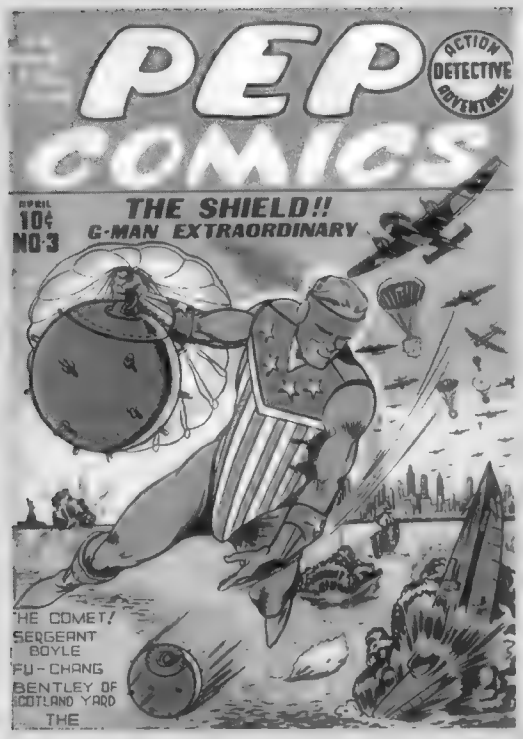
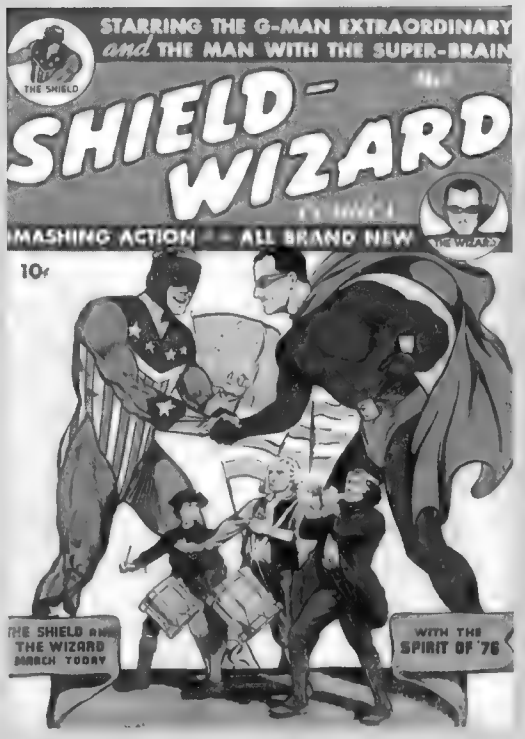
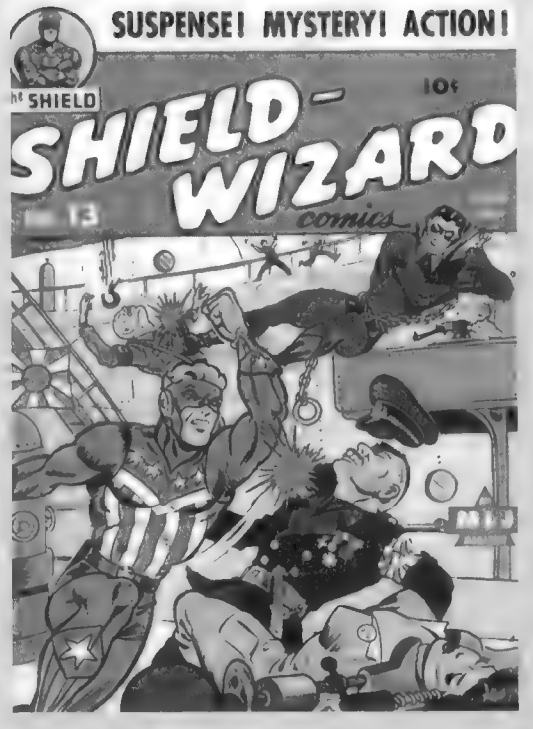
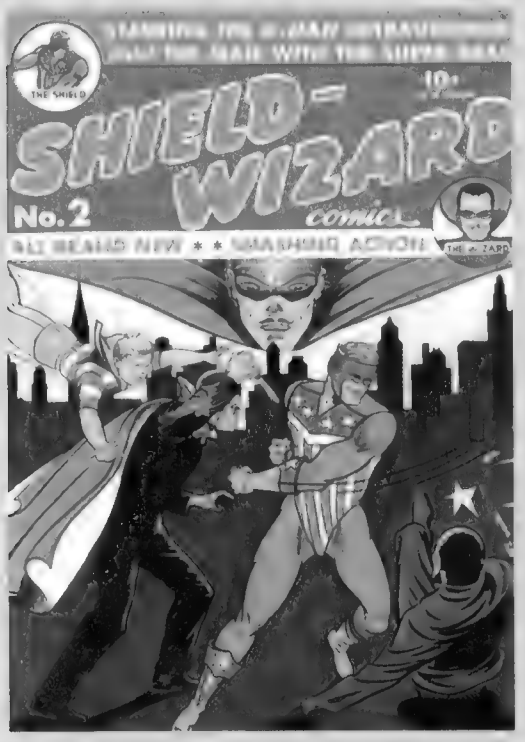
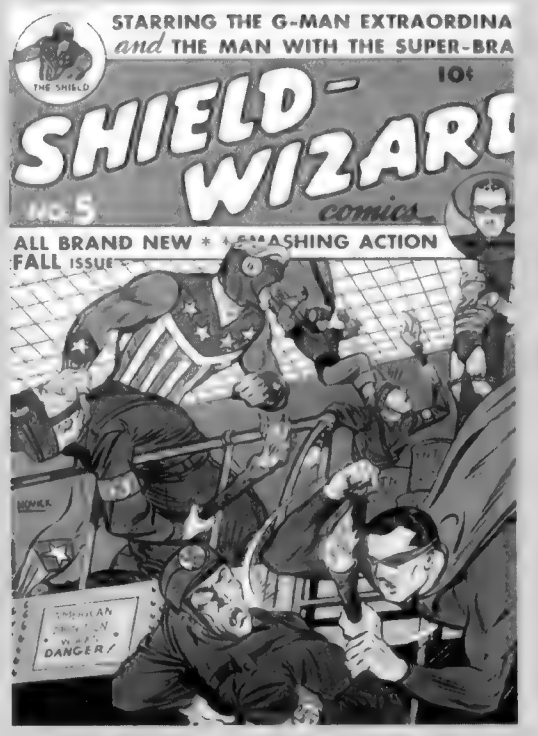
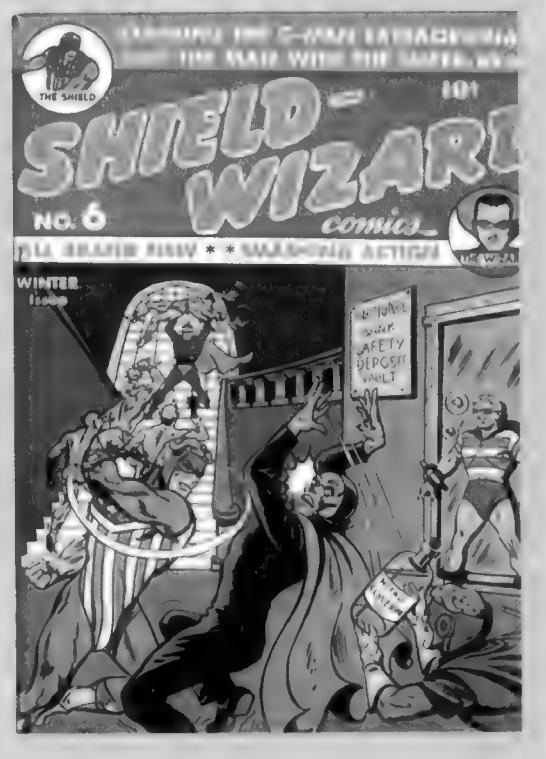


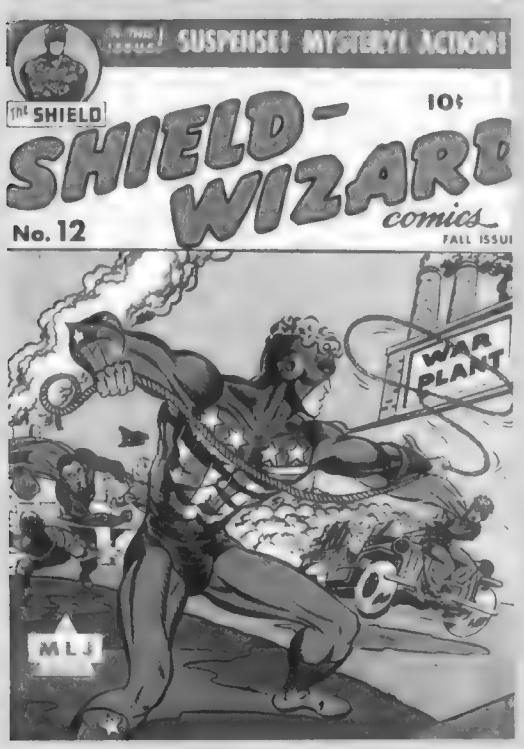

STARRING THE G-MAN EXTRAORDINARY
and THE MAN WITH THE SUPER-BRAIN
SHIELD-WIZARD
MASHING ACTION ALL BRAND NEW
10¢
THE SHIELD AND THE WIZARD MARCH TODAY
WITH THE SPIRIT OF '76











Truth, justice, patriotism and courage were represented by the four stars on The Shield's extraordinary uniform, which gave him all his powers, and his true identity, Joe Higgins, was only known by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.

There were two varieties of the Shield badge. The first, introduced with the beginning of the club, was 1 3/4", and the second, introduced in 1943, was slightly smaller at 1 1/4".

In 1948, with many super-hero comics on the wane and MLJ's Archie titles on the way up, the dissolution of The Shield G-Man Club was announced. *Pep Comics* #66 carried the message that the club would be known as the Archie Club. Members were requested to send in their membership cards in exchange for which they were to receive a new Archie Club button free of charge (New members could join for 10¢—you just knew the 2¢ was too good to last!). This should help explain why the membership cards from The Shield G-Man Club are so hard to find and so prized by collectors today!

Ringing Out the Old, Ringing In the New

by R.C. Harvey

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In his mountaintop studio that September in 1946, Caniff cleared his drawing board for the last act of *Terry* that he would produce. The entire year had been a kind of finale, and he wanted the last act to be a grand finale.

All year long, he had been bringing back onto his reticulated stage as many of the strip's most popular characters as he could for one last turn before the footlights. He did it partly because he wanted to work with some of his favorite characters one more time. But he did it also because he wanted his departure from the strip to make an impression on his readers—and on Tribune-News Syndicate officials. "I wanted 'em to miss me when I left," he told me.

Caniff began his last year on the strip with

TERRY
AND THE PIRATES
by MILTON CANIFF
LISTEN TO BURMA, HIGH-BOY TERRY LEE...
THIS CAT-CLUTCH I'VE BEEN HAVING WITH JANE ALLEN OVER WHICH OF US IS TO RIDE SIDE-SADDLE ON YOUR FREE KNEE WOULD BE SILLY IF IT GOT ANY MORE SERIOUS!
BUT BURMA, I---
JANE CLAIMS I HAVE NOTHING ELSE TO DO BUT SIT HERE AND FIGURE OUT WAYS TO CAPTURE YOUR ATTENTION WITH SUBTLE FEMININE TRICKS...
WELL, BURMA, YOU SEE, I---
...OKAY, SHE'S CALLED MY HAND, SO I'LL SHOW! I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO THINK I WAS USING A LOT OF HIDDEN GIMMICKS TO TAKE THE PLAY AWAY FROM JANE!
FIRST I SHAMPOOED MY HAIR, USING SOME FRENCH STUFF THAT I THOUGHT MIGHT CATCH YOUR INTEREST AS I WALKED PAST YOU...
THEN I BATHED IN BUBBLE FOAM SO I WOULD GLOW LATER WHEN THE ROOM GREW WARM, BUT I TOOK NO CHANCES ON OUT-SUBTLING MYSELF... I TOUCHED JUST A THOUGHT OF MY PERSONAL SCENT HERE AND THERE SO YOU WOULDN'T SLIDE OFF THE HOOK...
...SOME GIRLS WOULD HAVE GONE ALL OUT FOR THE BACKLESS GOWN, BUT BURMA KNOWS HOW A MAN HATES TO HAVE A BLACK DINNER COAT COVERED WITH DUSTING POWDER...SEE HOW I'M NOT HIDING ANYTHING?...
LUVVA MIKE...
JANE'S PHONE! ...HADN'T YOU-AH-BETTER ANSWER?
AND TO THINK THEY NAMED CRACKERS AFTER THE GUY WHO INVENTED THAT THING!
IS MISSY JANE ALLEN APARTMENTS, PLEASE?
YEAH... YEAH
IS DESK! COMES POLICEMANS TO SEE MISSY ALLEN'S GUEST LADY!
12-15

Caniff said he wanted 'em to miss him when he was gone, and one of his last Sunday *Terrys* (December 15, only two more to go) was surely a consequence of this motive. In the hottest sexual scene in the funnies, Burma puts the make on Terry, who is now, clearly, older than he was when they first met. Burma is, as usual, hiding from the British authorities—in this case, by bunking with Jane Allen, Terry's current flame, but Burma knows she can burn hotter than Jane. Before any of her plan gets consummated, the long colonial arm of British law (in the form of that fellow in the plaid overcoat reading the newspaper) shows up, and Burma does what she always does in this circumstance: she takes a powder out the window, and we never see her again. George Wunder, who carried on the strip after Caniff left, never used the character in his *Terry*.

one last encore for everyone's favorite villain—that slimy wad of unmitigated treachery and cowardice, Tony Sandhurst. And in the same adventure, he returned Connie and Big Stoop for their final appearance. Then after bringing Hotshot Charlie back from Boston where he'd gone to be discharged from the Army, Caniff arranged for the Dragon Lady to resume her peacetime criminal career. The stories in which these characters took their final bows are among the finest in the *Terry* canon.

In giving his pre-war cast a curtain call in these first post-war stories, Caniff revived much of the spirit of exoticism that permeated the early *Terry*. Sandhurst, Connie, Big Stoop, the Dragon Lady, Baron de Plexus—the names alone called up memories of high adventure in those pre-war days when the Orient was a distant and mysterious place. And the stories of 1946 seemed more free-wheeling than they'd been for years—as if the storyteller's imagination, liberated from the daily compulsion of marking time with the real events of an actual war, soared high once again, no longer entirely earthbound by mundane actualities.

Caniff's graphic style, too, seemed freer, sketchier, looser. He embellished his brushwork with a pen much more than he had before, noodling his drawings with fussy little penlines that modeled facial detail and made clothing seem softer, more flexible. *Terry's* panels were still drenched in the liquid sheen of shadowy blacks, but the forms were not etched solely by the contrast between light and shadow. Perhaps with the easing of the obligations he'd assumed for the war effort, Caniff had more time, time he could pour once again into drawing as well as writing his stories. Or perhaps the cartoonist's style was simply maturing into another phase. Whatever the cause, *Terry's* artwork had a subtle new look, the relaxed look of drawings made by an artist who could devote time to making them. The rendering of anatomy and postures of his figures was fluid not cramped and tight, and the feathering that gave them form was copious not cryptic. In story and art, Caniff was producing the best work of his career so far on the last year of *Terry*— just as he had vowed he would.

Meanwhile, over at his new syndicate, Field Enterprises, salesmen had continued to add steadily to the list of client newspapers signed up for the new, unnamed, undrawn strip. In mid-September, the tally stood at 144—not quite half *Terry's* circulation at the time. The sales figures were

encouraging, and Caniff was beginning to feel the pressure of an old problem in a new way. He was running out of time.

He had pushed enough deadlines to know how it felt when the clock was running out, but this time, the situation was different. This time, the limits of available time were closing in on him in two directions at once. He was running out of time to finish *Terry,* and he was running out of time to prepare the new strip.

Since last spring, Harry Baker at Field had been pressing Caniff to set a release date for the strip's debut. Initially, Baker had simply added to the termination date of Caniff's Tribune-News contract the six or eight weeks of production time needed to prepare and distribute the new strip and had come up with a mid-December starting date. Naively, Baker had allowed in his thinking virtually no time at all for the cartoonist to create the new feature—to design its characters and to determine its setting and to devise an opening sequence. Baker had apparently expected Caniff to begin drawing the first panel of the new strip on the day after he finished drawing the last panel of *Terry.* But Caniff had done nothing on the new strip and would do nothing until he was out from under the Tribune-News contract, free from any possible claim that syndicate could make upon his new creation. Mid-December was clearly an impossible release date.

Moreover, even Baker acknowledged that mid-December was traditionally a bad time to start a new feature: readers were too absorbed in holiday preparations to pay any attention to either a new comic strip or any of the publicity about it. Other syndicate executives felt that the holidays preoccupied readers at least through the first week or so of January. They favored a mid-January release date.

By the end of September, client papers were clamoring for an opening date. (Most of them had been signed up for over a year by then.) Baker's cohorts suggested January 6, the first Monday of the New Year, for the dailies, with the Sunday page to begin on the following Sunday. Caniff looked at his calendar and his plans for *Terry* and then begged for another week. Everyone agreed. It was done. There was still nothing on Caniff's drawing board about the new strip, but its debut date was set. Establishing that date simultaneously established another—the date the first Sunday page of the new strip would be due, ten weeks in advance of the publication date, ostensibly November 10. And that date, in turn, strenuously suggested that if Caniff worked on *Terry* much beyond the expiration date of his contract on October 15, he would be sacrificing his new strip to the old by giving up valuable time that he needed to create the new feature. But that was precisely what Caniff was contemplating doing.

Theoretically, his work for the Tribune-News ceased at midnight on October 15. If he were on schedule with his deadlines at that moment, his last Sunday page would be the one he did for December 22; his last dailies, for the week of November 11 (or, perhaps, for the next week, October 15 being midway between deadlines). That left a gap of five weeks between his last daily and his last Sunday. It was impossible to leave that gap: *Terry* told its story for seven days a week, and if Caniff carried the continuity on through the Sunday pages until December 22, he'd have to do the dailies in between those Sundays, too, otherwise the story would simply disintegrate. And he had no intention of letting his meticulously crafted creation fall into disarray during the last days of his tenure on it.

What's more, he wanted to ring down the curtain on his last act in *Terry* himself. He wanted to finish his final *Terry* story, to conclude it—not leave it in midstream for his successor to complete as he had done when he'd left *Dickie Dare.* And judging from his progress on the story he was now halfway through, he suspected that he wouldn't finish by October 15. As it turned out, his suspicions were borne out, and he worked on *Terry* beyond the contracted-for October 15, cutting into a couple of weeks that he badly needed for developing his new feature. But he couldn't part from his twelve-year-old creation any other way.

Not only did Caniff work on *Terry* past the end of his contract, he carried the story on until December 29, a week longer than his contract, strictly interpreted, required. The story demanded the extra week.

In a sweetly sorrowful conjunction of purposes, the celebrated last Sunday page expressed the emotions of the characters and of their creator. To those who knew that Caniff was saying farewell to *Terry* just as Terry was saying goodbye to Jane, the scene was doubly sad. Caniff used few words on that page. Pictures are better storytellers in such circumstances: prose turns purple too readily. Terry and Jane shake hands, part, then she comes back to kiss him. They part again and she tearfully boards the plane and leaves. Terry—pointlessly, at a loss for gestures as well as words—waves goodbye to the airplane as it flies out of sight. And then he turns and walks away from us. All in silence.

Caniff knew what he was doing, and he knew its effect. "The last page I did of *Terry,* he says his goodbye to Jane," he said, describing the scene again forty years later. "Both their lives were changing in that strip, but there's very little dialogue, almost none. She's going to try to find this guy, her number one guy, in an Australian hospital. But along the way, she's crossed paths with this nice young kind. Terry Lee. And neither of them want to break it off, and yet both of them have to go and do what they have to do."

He was describing himself.

He was proud of the last Sunday of *Terry.* "I liked that page," he said. "I liked being able to kiss it off with style."

And in the last panel, he added for knowing readers a final ironic flourish that spoke to the changing of the artist on the strip by seeming to speak of the season. "There was a poster on the wall that said, Ring out the old, ring in

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
Copyright, 1946, by News Syndicate Co. Inc.
TERRY
AND THE PIRATES
by MILTON CANIFF
...YOU DO UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, TERRY? I'VE GOT TO GO TO AUSTRALIA! I MUST KNOW!
SURE, JANE...YOU TOLD ME YOU PLAY FOR KEEPS! THE CONVALESCING SOLDIER WEARING DARK GLASSES WE SAW IN THE NEWSPAPER CLIPPING LOOKED LIKE SNAKE TUMBLIN, AND I AGREE YOU SHOULD TRY TO FIND HIM...
IF YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS IN ARMY INTELLIGENCE HADN'T RUN DOWN THE SOURCE OF THAT CLIP, I WOULDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START...
WELL, IT WAS FAIRLY OLD — AND THINGS HAVE CERTAINLY CHANGED IN AUSTRALIAN MILITARY HOSPITALS SINCE THE END OF THE WAR, BUT I KNOW YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TRACE SNAKE DOWN — IF HE REALLY... IS ALIVE...
...FINAL CALL FOR PASSENGERS FOR WESTERN PACIFIC AIRWAYS FLIGHT 14...
OH — THAT'S MY PLANE! SO LONG, TERRY...
'BYE, JANE...
RING OUT THE OLD RING IN THE NEW
12-29
© Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News Syndicate

Caniff's last Sunday *Terry*. He was justifiably proud of this page.

 [continued after Color Section]

Baby Milton. Check that tough expression! Milt told me that when he was born, his grandfather placed a gold dollar in the infant's hand to assure prosperity.

Eight-year-old Milton Arthur Caniff, Dayton, Ohio.

An Insider's Look

Private Photos from the

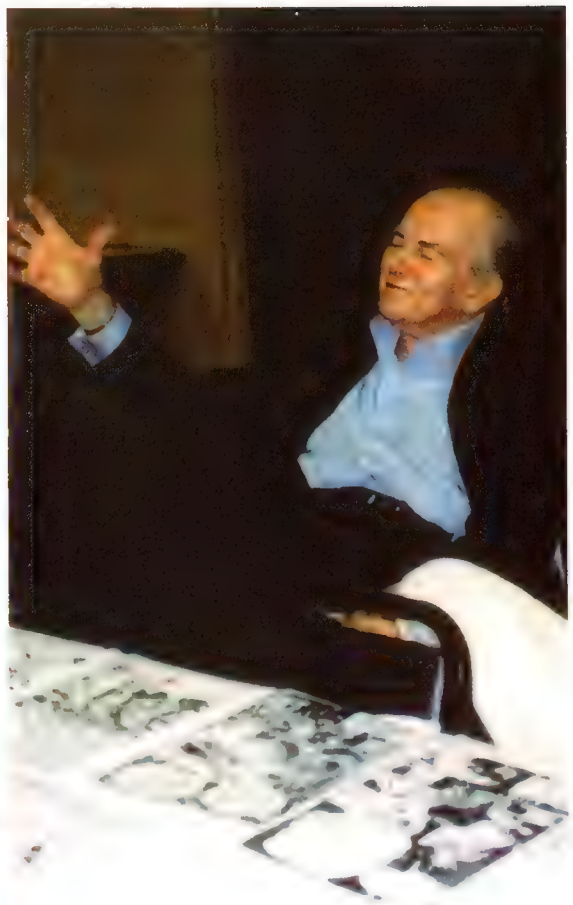
Shel Dorf Collection

by Shel Dorf

For a longtime fan and collector (since age 10) to become part of the staff of Milton Caniff was the "impossible dream" come true! I am happy to share some of my photos with the good readers of *Comic Book Marketplace* [an exclusive!] for this Caniff issue. As lettering man on *Steve Canyon* for 12 years, the real-life adventures almost equaled those in the strip!

All photos © 2002 Shel Dorf

COLOR GALLERY



(clockwise this page) Noel Sickles and Milt in the Palm Springs studio. They hold "gag" paintings Sickles did for his lifelong friend. Sickles had come to work on a presentation for a Bruce Lee newspaper strip which never sold.

Always a great storyteller! In life as in his adventure strips.

Always a favorite among his peers, here he is in 1976 with fellow cartoonist, Sergio Aragones.

(clockwise facing page) Tom French, longtime San Diego Comic-Con dealers' room coordinator at the Palm Springs studio. We'd gone there to do a videotape interview with Milt, which we later sold. Milt is holding an unfinished drawing of the **Terry** characters which

All photos © 2002 Shel Dorf

COLOR GALLERY

was done in the 1930s. He gave it to Tom as a gift! Not enough can be said about the late Tom's years of building the dealers' room into the finest in the country. His wife, Virginia was always at his side. They were very well loved by all.

Milt with longtime friend, Rosalie Hearst. Mrs. Hearst was the widow of George Hearst, oldest son of William Randolph Hearst. Rosalie read and loved the comics. She established the Senior Center in Palm Springs.

Charles "Sparky" Schulz once told me that he envied my friendship with Caniff. Seems when they first met Sparky was too shy to become a part of the circle which included Alex Raymond and Al Capp. Here in this photo taken at New York's Plaza Hotel. Sparky had just been given the "Gold Brick" award.

All photos © 2002 Shel Dorf

COLOR GALLERY

(clockwise this page) Here I am with Dorothy Partington, the original model for Milt's war-time morale builder, "Miss Lace." She was "Miss Reingold Beer" in New York and the Conover Model Agency found her for Milt by matching her with a drawing of the character. We found her in 1982 in Burbank, California. Delightful lady and still a dazzling beauty!

A never before published drawing of Terry villain, Baron DePlexus.

Milt with the most internationally famous character he ever created, "The Dragon Lady" from **Terry and the Pirates**.

All photos © 2002 Shel Dorf

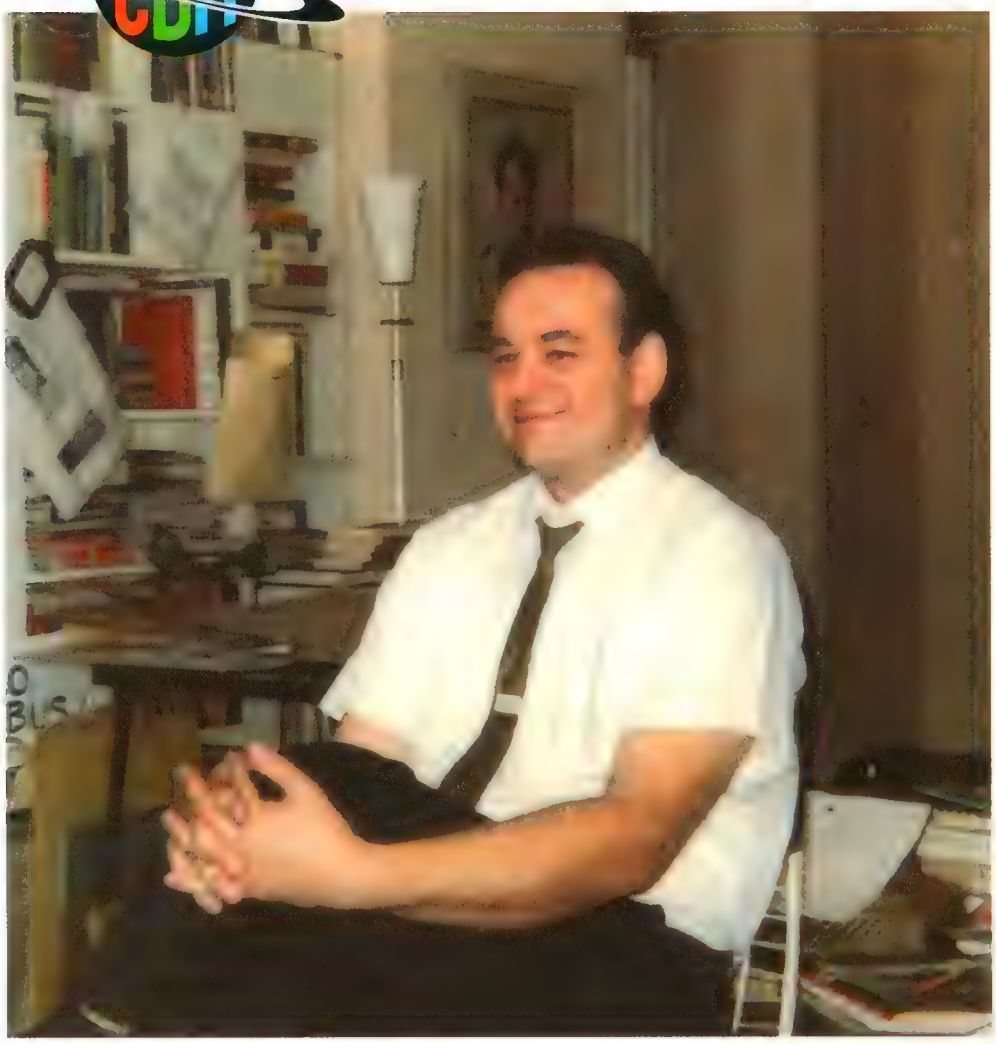
COLOR GALLERY

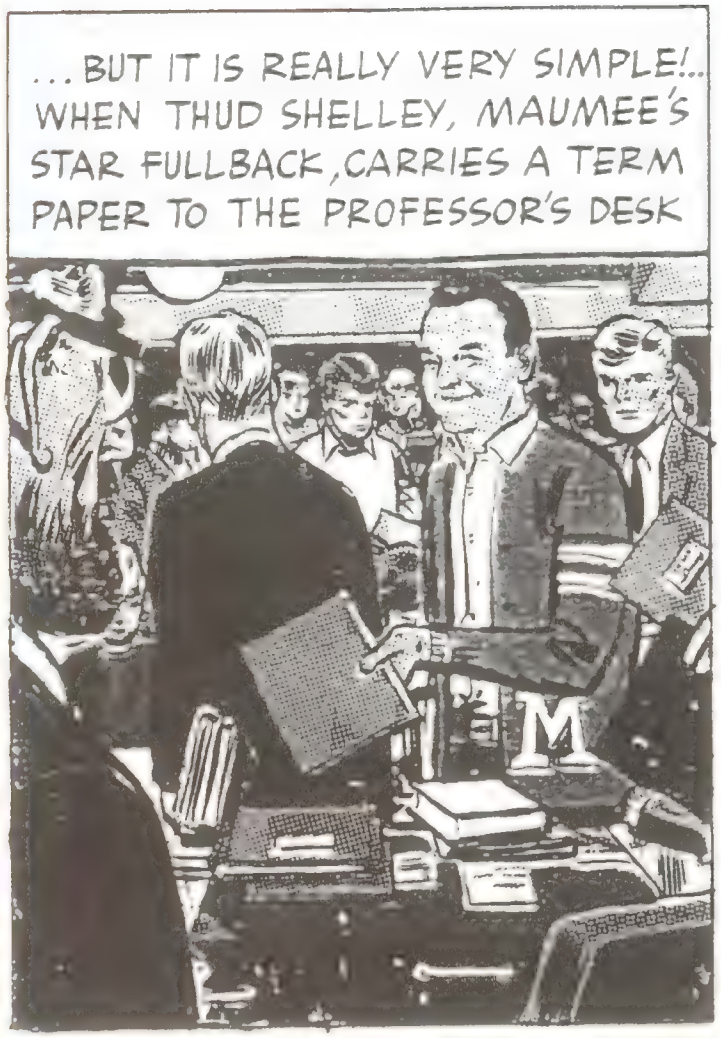
(above) Even in his seventies, Caniff spent 16-hour days at the drawing board. Here in late '70s, Palm Springs, California studio.

(right) The fabulous Caniff reference files. Now at Ohio State University. Once the Library of Congress came to Milt for something and they got help!

All photos © 2002 Shel Dorf

COLOR GALLERY





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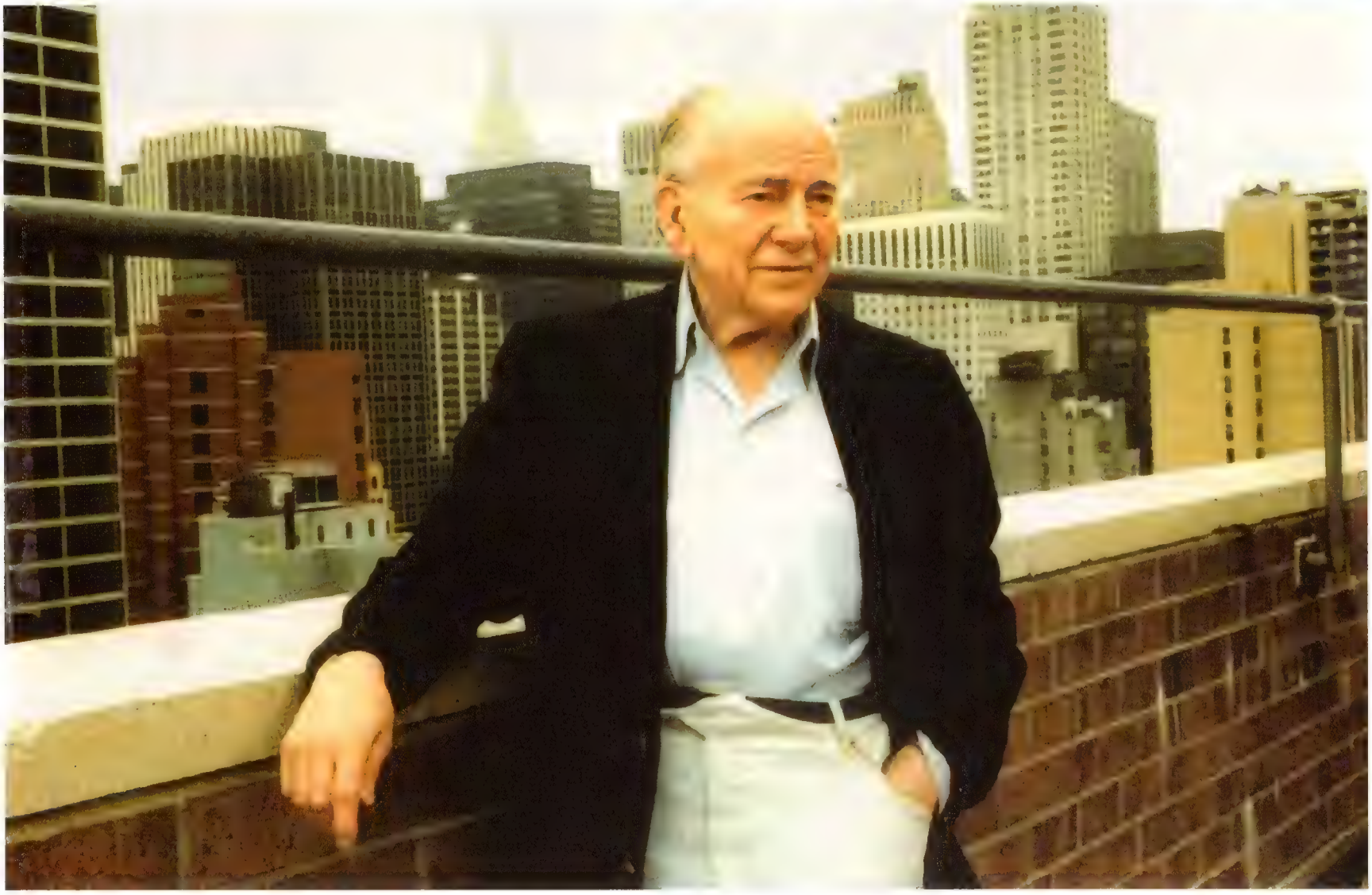
COLOR GALLERY

My years as associate of Milton Caniff can never be topped. Thanks to Russ Cochran and Steve Geppi and the gang at *Comic Book Marketplace* for the opportunity to share them.

(opposite page) One of the "perks" of being Milt's friend! He made me the character, "Thud Shelley" in **Steve Canyon**. Here are the reference photos he took. (1967, two years before I moved to San Diego and created the San Diego Comic-Con).

(This page, top) The last photo taken of Milt and myself (NYC 1986).

(bottom) We were up on the roof of his New York apartment, which was around the corner from the United Nations building. Neither of us knew he had cancer, which would take his life two years later.



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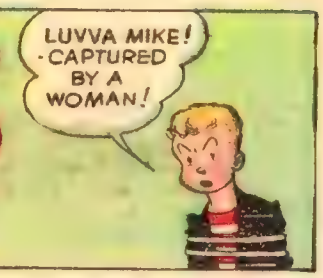
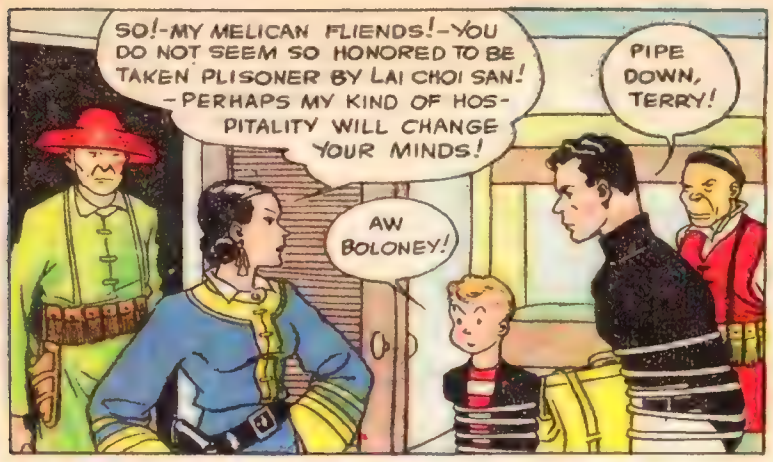
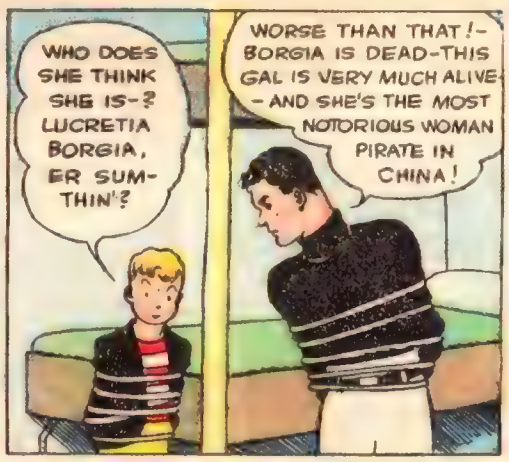
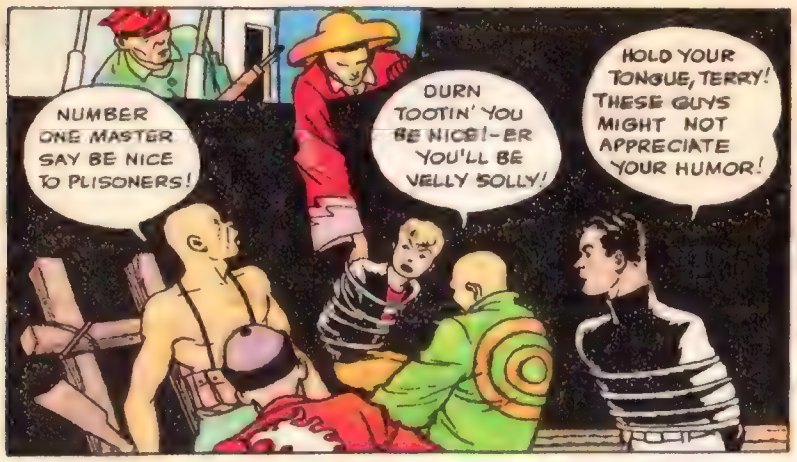
TERRY and the PIRATES

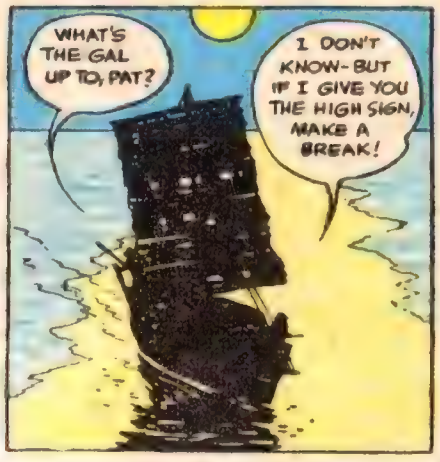
by MILTON CANIFF

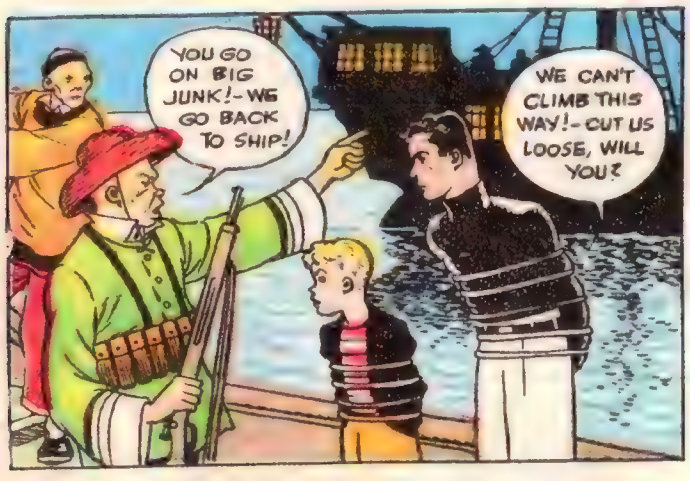


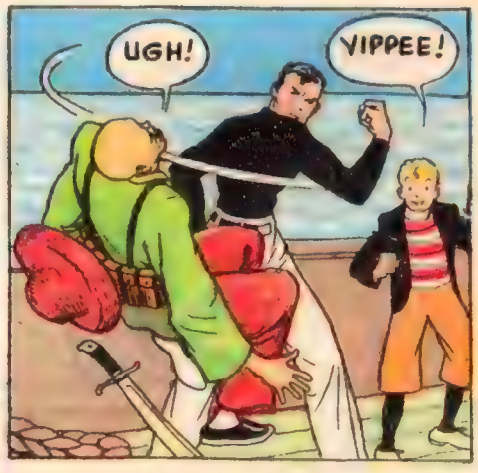

SO!-MY MELICAN FLIENDS!-YOU DO NOT SEEM SO HONORED TO BE TAKEN PLISONER BY LAI CHOI SAN! -PERHAPS MY KIND OF HOS-PITALITY WILL CHANGE YOUR MINDS!
PIPE DOWN, TERRY!
AW BOLONEY!

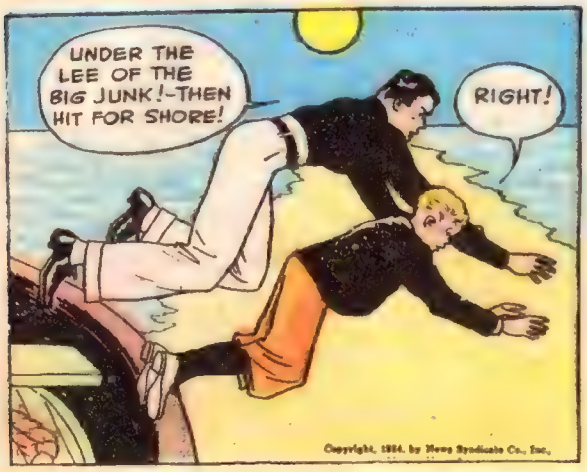

WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS-? LUCRETIA BORGIA, ER SUM-THIN'?
WORSE THAN THAT!- BORGIA IS DEAD-THIS GAL IS VERY MUCH ALIVE - AND SHE'S THE MOST NOTORIOUS WOMAN PIRATE IN CHINA!


NUMBER ONE MASTER SAY BE NICE TO PLISONERS!
DURN TOOTIN' YOU BE NICE!-ER YOU'LL BE VELLY SOLLY!
HOLD YOUR TONGUE, TERRY! THESE GUYS MIGHT NOT APPRECIATE YOUR HUMOR!



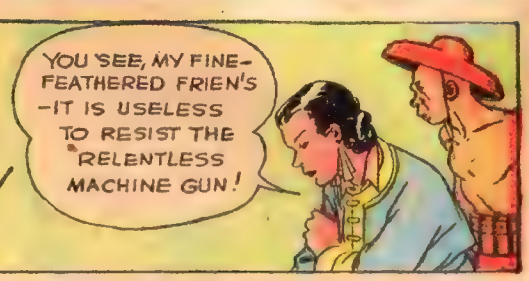


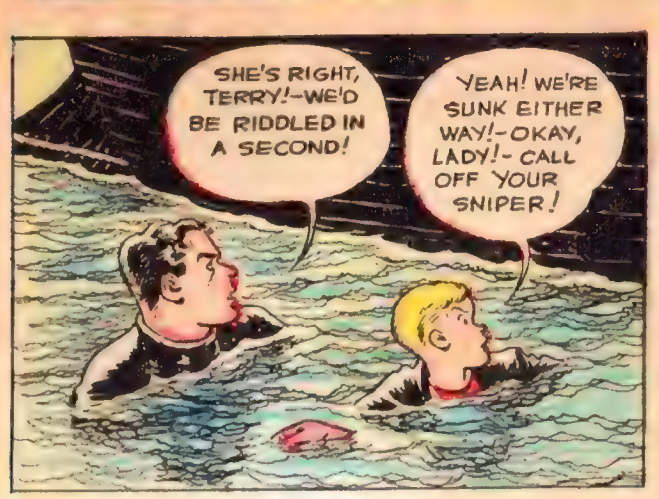


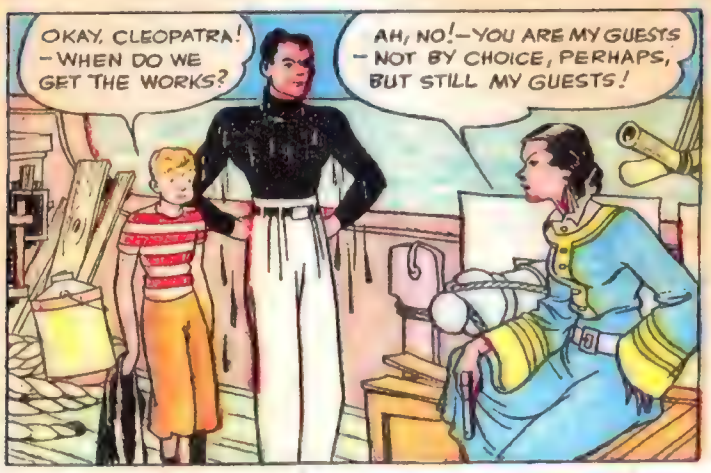


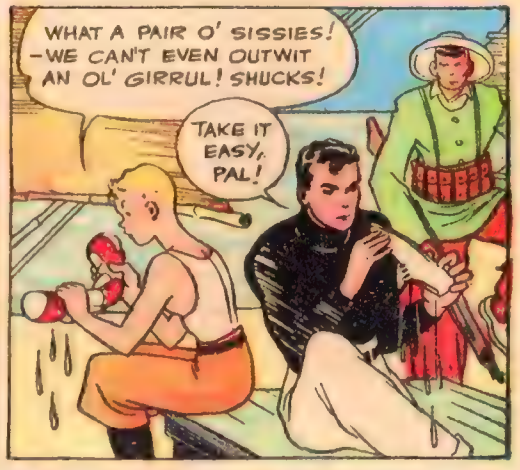
TERRY and the PIRATES

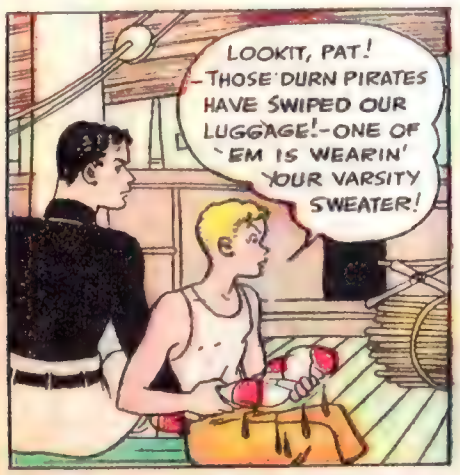
by MILTON CANIFF

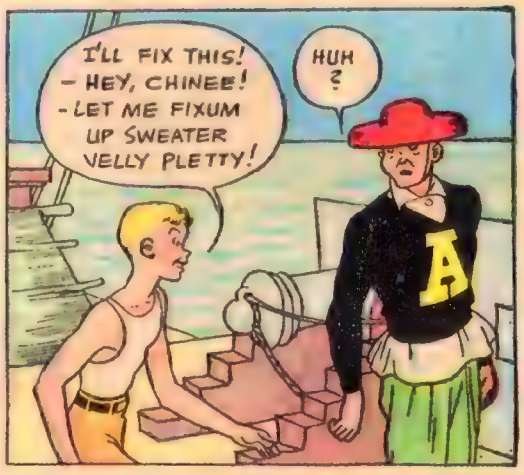


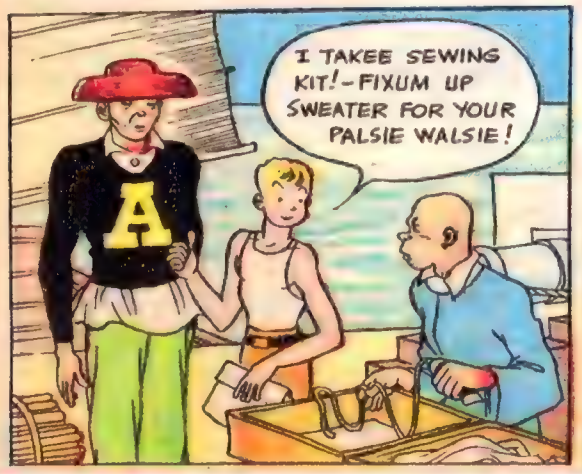


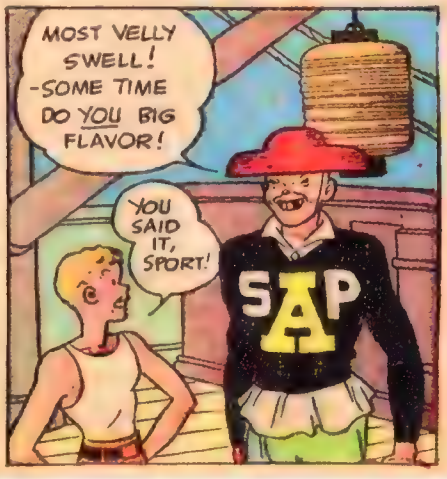












Marc Hempel: Naked Talent

by Jennifer M. Contino

Whether it's The Kindly Ones *or his own* Naked Brain, *one thing's for sure, Marc Hempel's one of the most talented men in comics. Hempel has been creating entertaining, intriguing, touching and comical works for years. At a time when most two-year-olds are cutting teeth, Hempel recalls drawing pictures and wanting to make things. He's always loved comics and cartoons, and that fact is apparent by looking at any number of his original series:* Gregory *and* Tug & Buster*; however, he's also got a more serious side as fans of the* Sandman *series discovered when he illustrated* The Kindly Ones. *Now this talented comics creator is busy working on an original series: Marc Hempel's* Naked Brain, *but we were able to catch up with him (fully clothed) to discuss comics, life and other items.*

Comic Book Marketplace: What were some of your childhood hobbies?

Marc Hempel: Watching animated cartoons on TV: *Beanie & Cecil*, *Colonel Bleep*, *Rocky & Bullwinkle*—plus all the Hanna-Barbera and classic Warner Brothers stuff. All of it was influential to some degree. I also dug the *Batman* and *Superman* TV shows, worshipped *The Monkees*, and made dozens of plastic models—mostly the Aurora superhero and monster kits.

CBM: What did you discover and begin following first: comic books or comic strips?

Hempel: It's hard to remember. I bought my first comic books in the summer of '65 (*Spider-Man*, *Jimmy Olsen*, *Tales of Suspense*, *Fly Man* and *Doctor Solar*!)—but I have no such specific memory of when I first started reading newspaper strips. I read and loved *Peanuts* in the sixties, *Pogo* in the seventies and *Calvin & Hobbes* in the eighties. In the late seventies, I started discovering all the early, classic stuff: *Wash Tubbs*, *Krazy Kat*, *Polly & Her Pals*, *Barnaby* and lots of others.

CBM: Which comic books were childhood favorites? What, if any, super-hero did you want to be when you "grew up"?

Hempel: I loved *Amazing Spider-Man*, especially as drawn by Steve Ditko! *Spidey Annual* #2 is one of my all-time favorites—although I first read it as a reprint in *Doctor Strange*. Neal Adams' Batman was a favorite when I was a little older. I would've been happy growing up to be either of these guys—but would've easily settled for Iron Man, Captain America, Superman or just about anybody with a cool costume and super powers. Who knows? Maybe someday I will!

CBM: What cartoons or other TV shows were childhood favorites?

Hempel: In addition to the shows I listed above, Chicago's *Bozo's Circus*, *Cartoon Town* and *Garfield Goose* were pretty high on the list. Also *Captain Kangaroo* (TV home of *Tom Terrific*)!

CBM: Out of those favorites, which influenced you as a creator? How did the works affect how you produced comics?

Hempel: It's pretty obvious that I was heavily influenced by animated cartoons. The fifties/early sixties "future-primitive" style (Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward) profoundly affected my approach to drawing and design—but it was guys like

Lemme Tell Ya 'Bout TUG!
This here's TUG!
He's my pal! my hero!
A man-o'-mystery with a dark past!
He's also a man o' few words-- on accounta them is sissy stuff!
TUG's a man o' action!
Lets his ol' fists do th' talkin'!
An' this huge, turgid, well-lubricated, manly protuberance is TUG's HAIR! Excitin', ain't it?
C'mine, of course, is similar.)
This is TUG's butt!
Lookit! All muscle!
An' those rugged yet b-boyish good looks!
I-I
I JUST LOVE-
I--I mean, in a manly, two-fisted, gun-totin', pro-military kinda way! heh...
YEAH, RIGHT.
PUNCH PUNCH

Bob Clampett and (especially) Chuck Jones who really taught me about storytelling, timing and expressing personality and emotion.

CBM: Most creative souls I know can't remember a time when they weren't creating...something. During your childhood, did you fit this mold?

Hempel: Well, my mom saved everything I drew in those early days—so I don't have to remember! Yes, I was drawing constantly—TV cartoon characters (no surprise), animals, cars, my own weird characters. And this all started when I was about two years old!

CBM: Most two-year-olds I know are too busy cutting teeth to create. How'd you get started at such an early age?

Hempel: I dunno, really. I enjoyed it, and I was good at it. Maybe I felt a sense of power, being able to define the world around me in visual terms. Of course, the endless praise from family and friends didn't hurt. My mom said I also became very shy and withdrawn at about that age, so I suppose that drawing became the most effective way of expressing myself. Even now, as a practicing "repressed white guy," creating art still serves much the same purpose. It sure saves on psychiatry bills!

CBM: Define "cartoonist."

Hempel: Umm...someone who creates cartoons? I'd guess that a cartoon would be a simple drawing that effectively expresses idea, character and emotion, often (but not always) humorous in nature. All comic book artists are cartoonists, whether they think of themselves that way or not.

CBM: Judging by that definition why are(n't) you a cartoonist?

Hempel: I'm certainly a cartoonist—perhaps first and foremost—but I'm also an illustrator, painter, designer and writer (not all cartoonists write their own material).

CBM: I know you're a fan of some of the earliest comic strips and sequential art from the late 19th and early 20th Century, how did you become aware of those works and what about them influenced you creatively?

Hempel: I think I saw a reprint of some *Krazy Kat* strips in *The Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* (what became *CBG*), and that was it! In the early eighties I read the *Smithsonian Collection of Newspaper Comics* and, later on, the NBM *Wash Tubbs* and Fantagraphics *Little Nemo* collections. I loved the incredible creativity and diversity that these strips had to offer—and, once I saw some of the originals, marveled at the size of the early Sunday pages! It's just sad to see what newspaper comics have been reduced to (and I'm not just referring to size).

CBM: Why should today's artists be respectful and knowledgeable of the past creators, in your opinion?

Hempel: Those old, dead guys knew what they were doing! They invented the language! It's analogous to becoming a jazz musician (hmm ... the only other native American art form) without studying Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington. Sorry, Kenny G ain't gonna do it!

CBM: How'd you get your start in comics?

Hempel: I was in my third year of college when Mark Wheatley (who had earlier published my work in Nucleus) showed my samples around New York along with his own stuff. I sold a one-pager to the *Heavy Metal* wannabe *Gasm* ... and a senior class project was pub-

lished in *Epic Illustrated*. Early on, I also sold color work to *Questar* and the Chicago-based magazines *Fantastic Films* and *Video Action*. *Heavy Metal* itself followed shortly thereafter; they bought one of my illustration class projects! Class credit plus big bucks—not a bad deal.

CBM: You worked on several projects in the early '80s: *Jonny Quest*, *Mars*, *Epic Illustrated*; what did you learn the most from these early works? What were some of the challenges you faced when handed a script and given a deadline to complete an issue?

Hempel: Well, I'm *still* learning how to meet a deadline, but let's not get into that! I'd have to say that—outside of the thrill of just working on an actual, monthly, color book—these projects taught me, sometimes the hard way, how to collaborate with other writers...something that I wasn't very experienced with. (And, in spite of this, Mark Wheatley is still a friend of mine!) These early series also enabled me to enhance my storytelling skills, especially in the context of a longer work. In truth, my work in *Epic Illustrated* and *Heavy Metal* was simply the kind of thing I usually did in those days—short, twist-ending science fiction stories—albeit utilizing a more fully painted technique.

CBM: What is *Gregory* and how did DC Comics become aware of the work and publish it?

Hempel: *Gregory* started out as a one-shot, three page strip in Fantagraphics' *Honk!* magazine. The story was "It's Spring!" and starred this straight-jacketed lunatic (then unnamed), locked up in a cell, who was waxing orgasmic at

Hullo. You're late.
Hell!
BARNABAS? I THOUGHT YOU WERE LOSTED.
I will never ever-- as long as I live--let you out of my sight again for a single, solitary second.
It's not even like they have proper ice creams at Disneyland anyway-- running off like that after a chocolate-covered banana... I ask you...
It's been two weeks. Two weeks.
BUT I DID LOOK FOR YOU. ALL OVER.
14

the coming of spring. It was a parable about the almost shut-in life of a cartoonist. Well, I fell in love with the character and the situation I put him in, and soon came up with enough short stories to fill a trade paperback. Of course, I had to give him a friend, so I created the death-prone rat named Herman Vermin. *Gregory* was sort of my "primal scream" after drawing Jonny Quest for too many months!

DC had just created its Piranha Press imprint in 1988, and was looking for new, highly personal projects. So I tracked down then-editor Mark Nevelow at the Chicago Comicon, and submitted a short *Gregory* strip. Well, I ended up selling them the property (at the time, Fantagraphics was also interested), although Nevelow admitted later that mine was the one book that he wasn't very enthusiastic about! (He had a drastic change of heart later on.) I went on to produce four volumes of *Gregory* for DC/Piranha Press between 1989 and 1993, which were both critically acclaimed and well received by the reading public. The first book had two sold-out printings, totaling 25,000 copies!

CBM: Who or what did you base the main cast on?

Hempel: Like everything I write: ME! All my characters (for better or worse) are expressions of various aspects of my own personality.

CBM: A lot of people search the back issue bins and other places to find issues of this series, to no avail. What plans are there for releasing a collection?

Hempel: No plans at present, but a collection is something that I'd like to do at some point, perhaps with some new material. Until then, try eBay!

CBM: What did you know of Neil Gaiman before you began work on *Sandman*?

Hempel: A friend of mine who worked in a comic shop recommended *The Sandman* to me—so I took a chance and picked up the "Midsummer Night's Dream" issue. While I was pleasantly surprised to find such literate and poetic writing in a comic book (the lovely Charles Vess art didn't hurt), I had no idea that I'd someday be happily contributing to this highly regarded series.

CBM: What initial thoughts did you have when you were asked to come on board that arc?

Hempel: I was surprised and delighted! What can I say? It turned out that my work on *Gregory IV* was ending just as *The Kindly Ones* arc was set to begin, so everything worked out perfectly. I found out later that Mike Mignola was the original choice for the series, but was unavailable. Of course, it was great when Mike came by my table at the San Diego ComicCon and praised my work! Thanks again, Karen, Neil, (and Mike)!

CBM: Who or what influenced the way you rendered these well-known characters?

Hempel: While I studied the often-inconsistent earlier versions of the characters (a model sheet would've helped!), I ultimately just went with my own, very direct, expressionistic style. In particular, I wanted to more effectively express character and emotion, important elements that I felt were lacking in some of the more illustrative versions that preceded mine. Looking at Gustav Klimt's work helped crystallize my vision in the final issues of *The Kindly Ones*.

CBM: [The reaction to] your style on *Sandman* seemed either hit or miss—with no happy ground in the middle. Most fans either seemed totally thrilled with the renditions, while some seemed revolted by them. What fan feedback did you get at conventions and other appearances?

Hempel: Well, the readers who loved what I was doing came up to me and told me so. The ones who didn't voiced their opinions most often via hate letters to DC! Currently, the praise seems to far outweigh the criticism. A while back, I was gladdened when several readers came up to me and said that at first they'd hated my approach, but then it ended up growing on them, and now they loved it!

CBM: Your own work seems comical and satirical, while *Sandman* can be a decidedly darker...flavor. What challenges did illustrating this series present after working on *Gregory* beforehand?

Hempel: Gosh—I enjoy both humor and drama, and I love alternating between the two of them. When I tire of one, I long to do the other. As I'd already done *Breathtaker* with Mark Wheatley some three years earlier (it was the series that brought my work to Neil's attention), it was no problem falling back into a more dramatic approach.

CBM: How did you switch gears to tackle *The Kindly Ones*?

Hempel: Did I mention that I'm a Gemini?

CBM: What was the best part of working on *The Kindly Ones*?

Hempel: Cashing the paychecks! No, wait...I used that one in an earlier interview. Hmm...was it working with Neil Gaiman? Getting to draw almost every character that ever appeared? Collaborating on the climax of one of comics' most acclaimed series? No, I think that the best part was drawing the character that seemed most like one of my own creations: Delirium!

CBM: What's one thing about *The Kindly Ones* you wish you could change?

Hempel: That one thing would be everything! I always get this feeling, after drawing a series, that now I'm warmed up—now I'm ready to draw the series! That's actually an exaggeration, as there are many scenes in *The Kindly Ones* that I'm still very happy with—that, in fact, I can't even believe I pulled off!

CBM: After *The Kindly Ones*, you began work on *Tug & Buster*. Definitely an "odd" couple, what inspired you to create these characters?

Hempel: I was admittedly growing frustrated working with characters in *Gregory* that either said nothing or only spoke in consonants—so I set out to create a sort-of sitcom in comics form…one that incorporated more verbal humor (Tug notwithstanding) and was more accessible, in terms of subject matter, to the greater comics reading public. It also gave me the opportunity to satirize the foibles of the modern American male, a theme that has great personal meaning for me. The formula must have worked, as HBO Animation loved the property enough to option it for a year!

CBM: What aspects of your own life do you try to incorporate into *Tug & Buster*?

Hempel: Growing up as a sensitive, creative male in 1960s Chicago was quite a challenge, lemme tell ya! The pressure to conform, to embrace sports and machismo was great then (as it might still be), and I had a hard time trying to both fit in and be my own art-and-music-loving self. I'm still dealing with these issues, attempting to define for myself what it means to be a man in today's society, and rejecting (and satirizing) those aspects that ultimately seem to be merely covert expressions of insecurity. See? That explanation alone could get me beat up in a bar!

CBM: For those who've not had a chance to check out the series, can you please tell us a little about it?

Hempel: *Tug & Buster* is my affectionate satire of the modern American male, utilizing various archetypal personalities. And as I said, I bring a lot of my own feelings and experiences into the stories. If this sounds too highbrow for anybody, trust me—it's very accessible and a lot of fun (although you might end up recognizing yourself at some point!).

CBM: Who are the main cast of characters?

Hempel: Tug's a big, dumb guy who doesn't say or do anything, but looks cool doing it. Think Elvis on steroids. Buster is the little twerp who idolizes and emulates him. Stinkfinger is a pseudo-intellectual slacker who is constantly exasperated by these two, and often offers the only words of sanity and reason. Genital Ben (no, that's not a typo) is a plump, polite pervert. Lovable losers all!

CBM: Why did you stop doing *Tug & Buster* stories?

Hempel: I was finding the longer stories less and less satisfying…and I was running out of ideas that fit well into

Three Little Words
LORI--I HAVE THIS FEELING FOR YOU THAT I CAN'T DESCRIBE!
SOMETHING DEEP INSIDE ME, WHEN I'M NEAR YOU...
yes, Alex?
A WARM, SATISFYING, FUZZY FEELING... A SEA OF EMOTIONS AND PASSION!
yes? yes?
AN INCREDIBLE HAPPINESS THAT WELLS UP INSIDE OF ME... LIKE I COULD BURST WITH JOY!
what is it?
YES!! OF COURSE!
IT'S- IT'S-
Tell me! Tell me!
PRIDE OF OWNERSHIP!!

that format. I always had intended to bring the characters back at some point, but I wasn't sure how or when. As I had some ideas for shorter strips lying around, *Naked Brain* seemed to be the perfect place for these guys!

CBM: What is *Marc Hempel's Naked Brain*?

Hempel: *Naked Brain* is a place to put my stuff—anything and everything that I can imagine! It's Marc Hempel cut loose: weird stuff, funny stuff, subversive satire, one-panel gags, sexy sketchbook pages, you name it—all short, sweet and to the point. I'd have to say (and other professionals who've seen the material will back me up) that *Naked Brain* offers up some of the best and funniest material that I've done in a long time.

CBM: What makes *Naked Brain* different from the average comic book offering?

Hempel: Well for one thing, there's no continuity! No endless storylines to follow! For those of us with short attention spans, *Naked Brain* is the perfect comic book! It's also funny, satirical and highly personal—without being morose or pretentious (like many "indy" books out there). With so much variety, there's bound to be at least a few things in the book that you'll find either thought provoking or funny. Like most of my personal projects, my target audience is people who either don't like comics or are sick of them!

CBM: What is the most challenging about working on *Naked Brain*?

Hempel: Having that great idea or mental image that somehow fails to materialize on the page! While I try to make it look easy, I've had to redraw some of these cartoons several times, just trying to get it right. The effort must have been worth it, 'cause I'm pretty happy with the results.

CBM: With so much of your work involving humor, I'm curious [as to] what makes you laugh?

Hempel: *New Yorker* cartoons, Monty Python, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, Mr. Bean, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, Buster Keaton, David Letterman, *Pogo*, Chuck Jones cartoons, Stan Freberg, *The Far Side*, *South Park*, *Kids in the Hall*, *The Onion* and anything by Albert Brooks!

CBM: Who or what influences your creation of gags and humorous strips in *Naked Brain*?

Hempel: It's just me reacting to myself, other people and popular culture. I hold a mirror up to society, and society has a good laugh (or punches me in the nose!). And to that end, it's crucial that I watch between eight and twelve hours of TV a day!

CBM: If their appearances within these pages are successful, will we see a return of Tug and Buster to their own series?

Hempel: Who knows? It all depends on how many new ideas I get, and how inspired I am.

CBM: What, if anything, would you do different with a *Tug & Buster* series now?

Hempel: I'd go with stories of varying lengths—from a single panel or page to several pages. I definitely wouldn't feel obligated to write 24 pagers just because I'm filling up a comic book. Other than that, it would be the same four guys we all know and love!

CBM: What's next for *Tug & Buster*?

Hempel: Outside of the appearances in *Naked Brain*, I have no specific plans.

CBM: A lot of your work seems well suited for animation or other film work. What plans, if any, do you have for them on the silver or small screen?

Hempel: As I stated earlier, HBO Animation already had a shot at *Tug & Buster*. They passed on it after several months of development, and, curiously, dumped all their other projects as well!) I think that the property still has great potential in either movies or television, but I can't say that I have any specific plans in this area.

CBM: When was the first time you ever got to meet one of your creative influences? What was that meeting like?

Hempel: I got to meet Chuck Jones! Mark Wheatley and I were standing in line with him at the Atlanta Fantasy Fair,

circa 1983. We had been working on the *Mars* series for First Comics. Strangely enough, Chuck said he really enjoyed *our* work! What a moment *that* was!

CBM: If you were stranded on a desert island and only had five items with you, what would you wish they were?

Hempel: My girlfriend Leslee, a $20,000 stereo system (solar-powered, I guess), a Sinatra record, an Afghani restaurant, and an endless supply of gin and tonic. (Er...what exactly constitutes an "item"?) On second thought, a pair of sunglasses should probably be on that list...

CBM: Celebrity Deathmatch: Bugs Bunny versus Mickey Mouse, who would win in a fight and why?

Hempel: Bugs, of course! He's not only more cunning, but he's a lot funnier.

VRROOOOM!
Pedal to the metal, TUG!
Peelin' out!
Burnin' rubber!
I wish I could see out th' rear window!
GLAND HO!!
Big busty-bodied babe sighted off the port bow!
Aye.. she's a whopper!
My mizzen mast is hoisted!
I'd sure like ta harpoon her, TUG...!
..right up the ol' poop deck!
Shiver me timbers! Walk my plank!
So where we goin', TUG? Which hot spot is th' mos' deservin' of our considerable presence?
STOP THE CAR!
THIS IS IT!
I CAN FEEL IT IN MY BONE!
Alright, Buster Bear- just call me when you and Tug want to be picked up!
SLAM!
Aw, mom...

CBM: What's it like to meet fans at conventions who are so enamored with your works? What's the coolest meeting-a-fan story you have?

Hempel: After slaving away all by myself for months on end, it's a very pleasant and moral-boosting experience, lemme tell ya. The early reaction to *Naked Brain* has been especially encouraging. No specific instances come to mind, but I've met a lot of nice people over the years.

CBM: What's the suckiest meeting-a-fan story you have?

Hempel: Hmm...I don't think I have one. My fearsome appearance must scare off the goofy ones! I do have copies of a couple letters from pissed-off *Sandman* readers that are taped to the "Door of Shame" at Insight Studios.

CBM: What's the craziest thing anyone's ever asked you to draw in his or her sketchbook?

Hempel: Sexual congress involving two well-known characters of different species. That's all I'll say!

CBM: Did you draw it?

Hempel: Yes, but for some reason the drawing (tasteless, even for me) remains in one of my sketchbooks. No, you can't see it!

CBM: What would your dream project be and whom would you choose as co-creators on such a project?

Hempel: As I prefer working by myself, *Naked Brain* really is my dream project! It can be anything I want it to be! Aside from that, I'd like to work on a Batman project. (Really!)

CBM: If you could meet any three people alive or dead, whom would you choose and what would you talk with each about?

Hempel: Jesus Christ, Wally Cox, and Billie Holiday. Topic: What's it like on the other side?

CBM: What non-comics projects (if any) are you working on?

Hempel: Nothing that's forthcoming. Nothing that's sold. These days, I just do what I do, and sell it to whoever wants it...without really considering where it might end up. In fact, a lot of the stuff in *Naked Brain* wasn't originally intended for the comics market, but that seemed like a great place for it. While I am continuing to produce new portfolio pieces and such, a lot of it will undoubtedly appear in the book...especially if the series continues beyond the planned three issues. I wouldn't want to deliberately leave something out of the book that I felt strongly about, that I knew readers would really enjoy. I'm trying to make *Naked Brain* the best comic book in the world!

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["Ringing" continued]

the new," he remembered with a smile, "because it was nearly New Year's Eve that Sunday."

It was all very neatly done, a classy curtain for the last act. Caniff had said goodbye to those of *Terry's* readers who knew he was leaving, and he had done so without intruding noticeably into the story himself; so those readers who knew nothing of cartoonists and their comings and goings would continue to know nothing and could go on reading *Terry* in blissful ignorance of the change in management.

He made his last mark on the paper and put his pen down and stared one last time at the face of the character he had created and brought up from adolescence to manhood, the character whose name was now a household word. He was satisfied. He was making a clean break with the strip. No loose ends. It was a tidy, professional accomplishment. And now he was done with it. The future of the strip that had made him famous and the fate of the characters he had created and so painstakingly fostered for twelve years now lay in the hands of another.

For months, Caniff had been preparing himself for the time that he would leave *Terry*. He had reconciled himself to giving up his creation to another by reminding himself repeatedly of how much better his situation would be with his new syndicate. But when the moment of parting came at last, when the irrevocable finality of it rang through his mind like a peal of bells, when there was nothing more he could do on the strip and when he needed to let go of it, he felt profoundly like a parent who was being separated from his offspring. It was a feeling that never quite went away.

"I felt like I was losing my children," Caniff said. "It was as if they were being taken away from me by court order—taken away and shipped off to some distant and dangerous place where I could do nothing to help them anymore."

If Caniff felt, for the moment, helpless, his fans felt, in some measure, abandoned. Some were irate. Many wrote to say how sorry they were that he was leaving *Terry*. But they also expressed eager anticipation about his new strip. At his old syndicate headquarters, Patterson's right arm, Mollie Slott, responded to one of Caniff's fans and summed up the contradictory feelings: "I myself feel as you do about the drawing in *Terry* and about the artist who draws it. We are sorry to lose him, but it is good to know that he will continue to give pleasure to millions of readers through whatever else he does for newspapers."

Was Caniff sorry to be leaving *Terry*? Of course. Did he regret his decision to leave? Perhaps. A little. He never said anything about it to me in so many words, but once when we were talking about his departure from the strip, he approached the subject obliquely.

"I didn't want to use any outside offer as a lever or a threat, like blackmail to get more of something," he reflected. "I felt they should have voluntarily given me more money. So when the Field thing came along, they would have had the lever on me if they had done it voluntarily. But they didn't. So I felt no attack of conscience at all. I'd paid off my debt. I'd paid my dues and plenty at that point. The Tribune-News people were very chintzy about that kind of thing, I always felt—by comparison with King Features, for example. Joe Connolly [the head man] at King would have looked over the income sheet, and he would have sensed the moment to give you a bonus or something. Then he'd have you hooked. It's a curious kind of blind spot at the Tribune-News. They had it so made that they just didn't think about it. Nobody was ever gonna leave the Tribune."

He did. But if they hadn't been so cheap, what might have happened?

Caniff undoubtedly knew that *Terry* had achieved a greater hold on its readers than *Steve Canyon* ever did. The times were different: in the 1930s and 1940s, the readers of comic strips were more engaged with the characters than they were in later decades. For comparable circumstances in recent times, for instance, think of the viewer involvement with Jerry Seinfeld and his pals. Or with TV's "Friends." Or the summer we all waited to find out who shot J.R. Ewing.

I'm sure Caniff himself had a greater affection for the characters of *Terry*. They had come to him out of the gauzy mists of fantasy in the days of his youth when dreams of adventure in faraway places were unencumbered by such practical considerations as how Pat Ryan might be making his living. Terry and Pat had been the stuff of wish-fulfillment not the contrivances of hard-headed calculation about what would appeal to an audience and what the storyteller needed for maximum flexibility in creating a great variety of stories.

Terry and Pat and the rest were organic, growing out of the stories and the storyteller's own sense of adventure as he explored his medium, growing along with them, maturing as a creative artist and honing his craft as he went. As Terry grew in years and maturity, so did his creator grow in skill and in the understanding of his art. They grew up together, creator and created, and the experience formed a bond of brotherhood. Terry and Pat had been real in a way that Steve Canyon never was. Caniff believed in all his characters, but he talked about the *Terry* characters as he might have talked about his children; when he talked about Canyon, he was discussing a commercial product. Moreover, the *Terry* characters were forever associated in his mind with those exciting years of creativity and burgeoning fame as he learned, and shaped, his medium during the wonderfully malleable thirties when the whole world, it seemed, could be formed to fit one's youthful vision of life in it.

Although *Steve Canyon* was a greater commercial success for Caniff than *Terry* ever could have been, the artistic

[continued on page 69]

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The Man Who Invited

Just to understate the obvious, the Oval Office in the White House is a fairly awesome place. History is shaped here. Lincoln sat here. So did Jefferson and Grant and Teddy Roosevelt and his cousin Franklin. And before TV's *West Wing* showed us every week what the room looked like, it had a somewhat mysterious aura. Few persons had ever seen it let alone been in it. So when Milton Caniff, Mort Walker, Bill Mauldin, Don Sherwood and George Wunder met President Lyndon Johnson in the Oval Office, they were properly reverent. They were in town to do a presentation about the military in comic strips at a luncheon at the National Press Club, and when Johnson heard they were passing through, he had asked them to drop by the White House to see him before going to the Press Club.

After gaining the White House itself, they were shown into a small nearly bare room where they waited for fifteen minutes or so before being summoned into the Oval Office. This historic room was smaller than they'd expect-

ed, only about twenty-five by twenty-five feet. Johnson was seated at his desk directly opposite the doorway they entered through. He greeted them without standing, shaking hands all around. The cartoonists, having not been invited to sit down, remained standing. The small talk circled around their strips, all set in military milieu, and the President expressed his appreciation for the work they did about "our good fine soldiers."

After a few minutes, Johnson made a beckoning motion, and photographers suddenly appeared, surrounding the cartoonists, directing them into poses with Johnson and igniting a crackle of flash bulbs. Then, abruptly, the interview was over.

Johnson rose and they all walked toward the door. As they said good-bye, Caniff said:

"Are you doing anything for lunch, Mr. President?"

"Why?" said Johnson.

"C'mon over to the Press Club," Caniff said, "and have lunch with us."

Mort Walker, who recounted this escapade to me, was aghast. "I'm sure that Presidents of the United States have every second of every day planned weeks in advance," he said. "But it shows the kind of moxie Milton had."

At Caniff's invitation, Johnson turned to his secretary, who murmured that he had an appointment.

"Forget it," Johnson said.

And he went to the Press Club that day for lunch.

He walked over, stopping every now and then on the way to pick up street litter and drop it into nearby trash cans; he was helping enforce his wife's national beautification program.

At the Press Club, consternation and turmoil reigned the instant the cartoonists, who preceded the President

Lyndon Johnson wasn't the only U.S. President Caniff hobnobbed with. Here he is with Gerald Ford.

the President to Lunch

by R.C. Harvey

INTRODUCING TERRY AND THE PIRATES
TERRY IS A WIDE AWAKE AMERICAN BOY WHO SE GRANDFATHER LEFT HIM A MAP OF AN ABANDONED MINE IN CHINA
THE OTHERS CONCERNED IN HIS TREASURE HUNT ARE
PAT RYAN -TERRY'S PAL, TWO FISTED ADVENTURER
DALE SCOTT.. WHO RUNS THE BOAT ON WHICH THE TREASURE HUNTERS SAIL
POPPY JOE ... A HALF-CASTE, WHO HAS LEARNED OF THE TREASURE - AND MEANS TO HAVE IT
OL' POPSCOTT.. - DALE'S FATHER - ENS WEBB ON THE TREASURE BOAT.
GEORGE WEBSTER CONFUCIUS.... BETTER KNOWN AS CONNIE SHIPS COOK
STARTS IN THIS SPACE TOMORROW!
MILTON CANIFF

The evolution of Caniff's drawing style. At first (fall-winter 1934), he drew *Terry* in the same simple linear style he had used with *Dickie Dare* (introductory strip, top, and assorted panels on the second tier). In the spring of 1935, Caniff's studio mate, Noel Sickles, was experimenting with ways to get high quality illustration by laying in dramatic black solids for shadows in his *Scorchy Smith* strip (third tier); soon (December 1935), Caniff began doing the same thing (assorted panels from *Terry*, bottom tier).

so off-handedly invite the President of the United States to lunch. At the time of this adventure, early in Johnson's term, Caniff's reputation transcended the field of cartooning; he was a legendary figure, a national eminence. But the man who could get the President to come to an unscheduled lunch with him seemed wholly unconscious of his status as one of the nation's institutions. On a busy weekend in Columbus, Ohio, years later, he could spend hours over a lunchroom table in Fawcett Center with four of his readers and make them feel as if they were his personal friends and had been for decades.

Caniff was celebrating his birthday in Columbus on that weekend when I met him for the first time, and he had been a syndicated cartoonist for forty-nine of his seventy-five years. He would continue for another six years. And for much of that time, he had been one of the most popular and well-known cartoonists in the world. Among his peers, he was respected to the point of veneration.

"He was cartooning's only elder statesman," said cartoonist and playwright Jules Feiffer.

Said Doug Marlette, editorial cartoonist and creator of the strip *Kudzu*: "Because he did cartoons, it forced everyone else to take them more seriously."

"He was our industry spokesman for many years," Walker said. "His voice was heard by every-

by a few minutes, announced that they were bringing a guest and revealed the guest's identity. Suddenly, there was a scramble among would-be dignitaries for seats at the head table.

Caniff enlisted his colleagues in a change of program. Instead of drawing their familiar military characters, he suggested, they would do a caricature of the President—each one of them drawing a different facial feature on the same portrait. Walker got the ears.

Few but Caniff would have had the panache to

... AND PEOPLE USED TO TELL ME I WAS GETTING INTO A CUT-THROAT BUSINESS...
BING 'EM! BANG 'EM! - GOT 'EM HOPPIN' LIKE FLIGHTENED KANGAROODLES!!
MILTON CANIFF

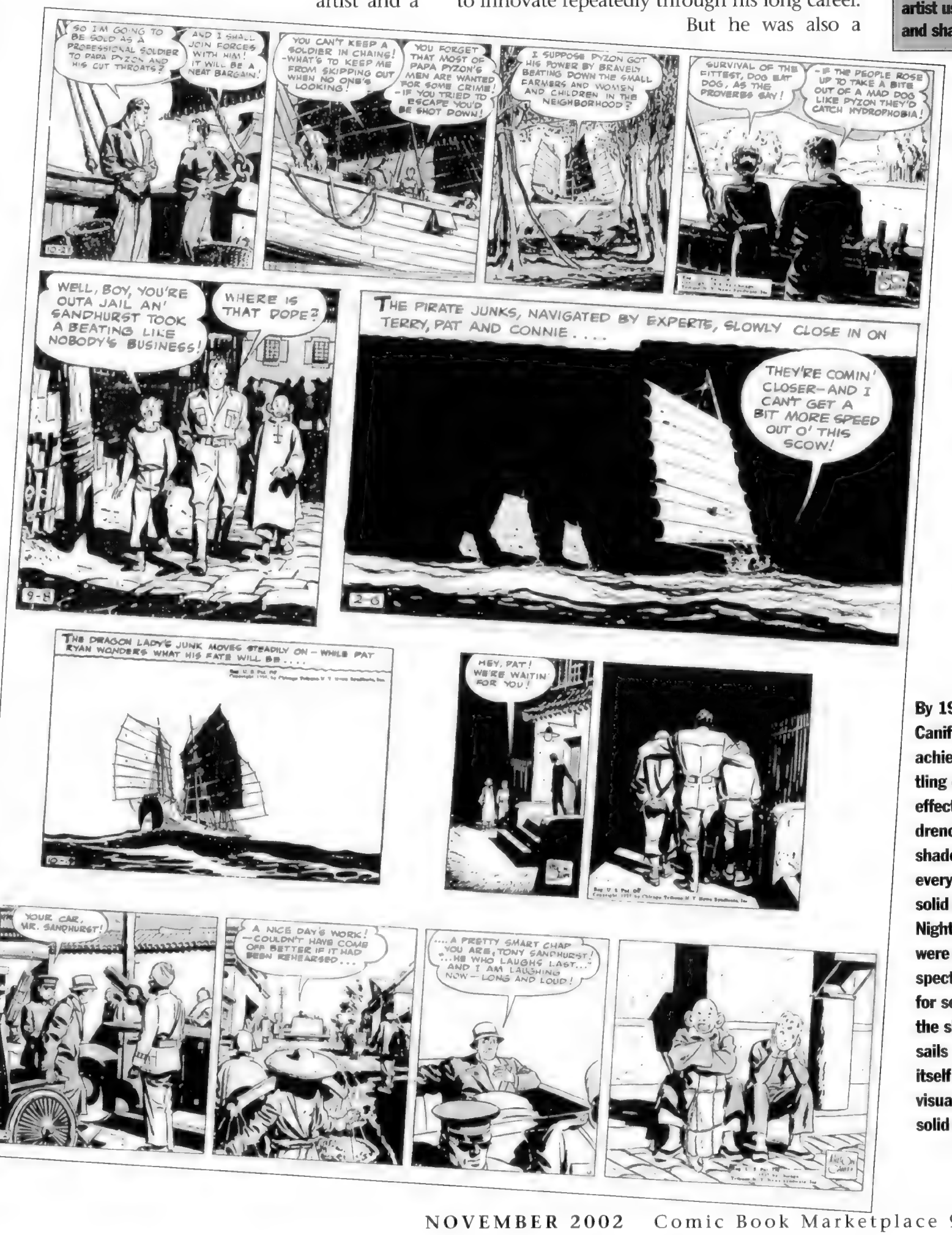
Caniff, the armchair adventurer, is surrounded by mayhem but only in his imagination as Connie, Pat Ryan and Terry take on hordes of bad guys. (Self-caricature, 1945; mayhem, July 1937.)

one because it was so literate and rational. When the cartoonists felt the need for a little more respect, we trotted out Milton to speak for us."

Caniff was, in short, a gent. He was a skillful artist and a gifted storyteller, and he was, for a long time, in perfect tune with the popular mood, a basic requirement for an entertainer to have a career longer than a season. As a cartoonist, he was technically proficient and imaginative enough to innovate repeatedly through his long career.

But he was also a

chiaroscuro– a style using only light and shade in order to achieve the effect of a third dimension; the way that an artist uses light and shade.

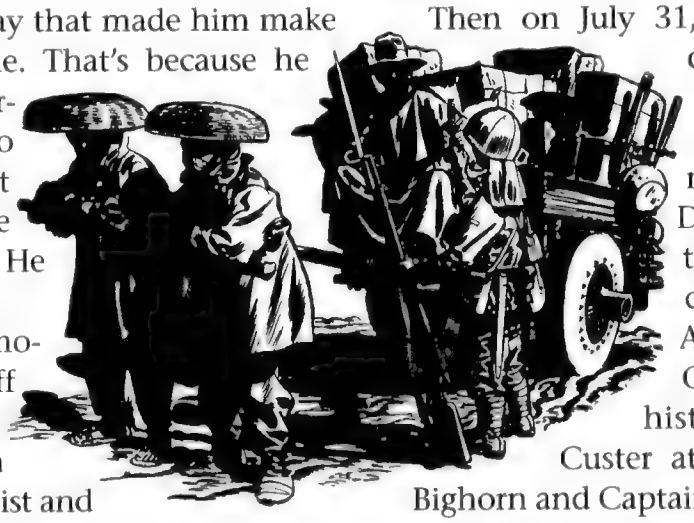

SO I'M GOING TO BE SOLD AS A PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER TO PAPA PYZON AND HIS CUT THROATS?
AND I SHALL JOIN FORCES WITH HIM! IT WILL BE A NEAT BARGAIN!
YOU CAN'T KEEP A SOLDIER IN CHAINS! -WHAT'S TO KEEP ME FROM SKIPPING OUT WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING!
YOU FORGET THAT MOST OF PAPA PYZON'S MEN ARE WANTED FOR SOME CRIME! -IF YOU TRIED TO ESCAPE YOU'D BE SHOT DOWN!
I SUPPOSE PYZON GOT HIS POWER BY BRAVELY BEATING DOWN THE SMALL FARMERS AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST, DOG EAT DOG, AS THE PROVERBS SAY!
-IF THE PEOPLE ROSE UP TO TAKE A BITE OUT OF A MAD DOG LIKE PYZON THEY'D CATCH HYDROPHOBIA!
WELL, BOY, YOU'RE OUTA JAIL AN' SANDHURST TOOK A BEATING LIKE NOBODY'S BUSINESS!
WHERE IS THAT DOPE?
THE PIRATE JUNKS, NAVIGATED BY EXPERTS, SLOWLY CLOSE IN ON TERRY, PAT AND CONNIE....
THEY'RE COMIN' CLOSER—AND I CAN'T GET A BIT MORE SPEED OUT O' THIS SCOW!
THE DRAGON LADY'S JUNK MOVES STEADILY ON—WHILE PAT RYAN WONDERS WHAT HIS FATE WILL BE....
HEY, PAT! WE'RE WAITIN' FOR YOU!
YOUR CAR, MR. SANDHURST!
A NICE DAY'S WORK! —COULDN'T HAVE COME OFF BETTER IF IT HAD BEEN REHEARSED...
....A PRETTY SMART CHAP YOU ARE, TONY SANDHURST! ...HE WHO LAUGHS LAST... AND I AM LAUGHING NOW—LONG AND LOUD!

By 1936-37, Caniff was achieving startling chiaroscuro effects by drenching the shadow side of everything in solid black. Nighttime scenes were particularly spectacular, and for seascapes, the sky or the sails or the sea itself could be a visually potent solid black.

gent, a vintage term that traditionally denotes "a polite, gracious and considerate man with high standards of propriety and correct behavior." He was caring and compassionate and enormously talented. And it was the combination, gent and genius, that made him the object of such deference in his profession.

Bill Yates, Caniff's editor at King Features for many years, said of him: "He was aware of his mark in cartooning history, but it didn't affect him, his ego, in any way that made him make you feel uncomfortable. That's because he had interest in the person who was talking to him: he wasn't just thinking of himself. He wanted to know you. He liked people."

He reflected a moment. "Milton Caniff was not just a star," he finished, "he was a supernova. As a cartoonist and as a person—I don't know which I admired the most."



In this swash-buckling non-canonical strip from 1937 (despite the September 7 date, it never appeared as part of the *Terry* saga), Caniff's crisp linework contrasts starkly with solid blacks on the shadow-sides of everything. Undoubtedly drawn solely for promotional purposes, the original resides in the Sheldon Art Gallery on the campus of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

Others of the medium's pacesetters were more gifted illustrators—Winsor McCay, Alex Raymond, Harold Foster. And some were more startlingly novel in their conceptions—Elzie Segar, George Herriman, Al Capp, Crockett Johnson, Harold Gray, Jack Cole, Walt Kelly. But no one shaped the medium more.

Only a few matched him in this—Roy Crane, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, perhaps Bud Fisher and maybe Chester Gould. But none surpassed him in the influence he exerted upon the field through the sheer quality of his work. Caniff's achievements set the standards by which all storytelling comic strips were, subsequently, judged.

His first nationally distributed work was a panel cartoon called *Mister Gilfeather* that, with the release for September 12, 1932, he took over from Al Capp when Capp left the Associated Press Feature Service where they were both employed and where they had met, young and ambitious and willing to labor long, long hours into the night to perfect their craft. By the following spring, Caniff had supplanted the boorish blow-hard Gilfeather with a topical gag cartoon, *The Gay Thirties*, which debuted May 4.

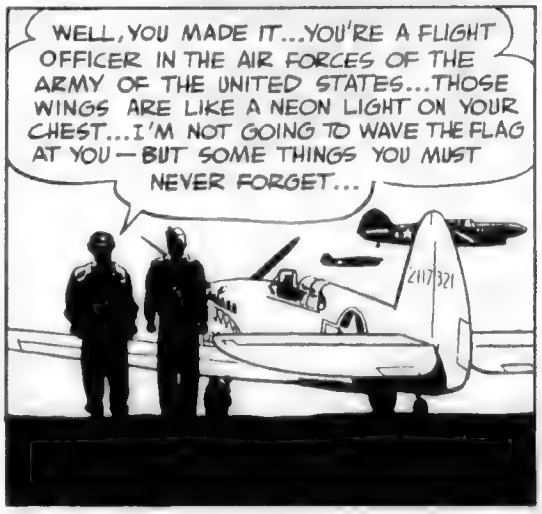
Then on July 31, Caniff's first syndicated comic strip, *Dickie Dare*, was launched.

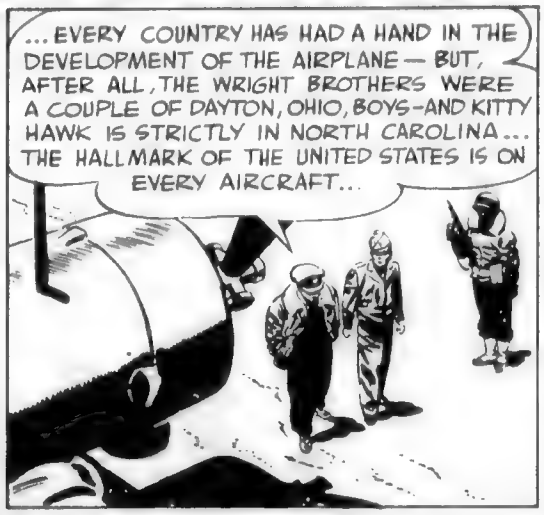
For most of Caniff's 15-month stint on the strip, Dickie dreams himself into the lives of such storybook characters as Robin Hood, Aladdin and Robinson Crusoe. But he also meets historical figures, General Custer at the Battle of the Little Bighorn and Captain Kidd, bounding over the heaving main (or vice versa). Then in the spring of 1934, Caniff took off in a new direction. Dickie would dream adventures no more. Instead, he is taken on a world tour by a friend of the Dare family, "Dynamite" Dan Flynn, vagabond journalist.

Then, suddenly, in the very middle of a storyline that fall, Caniff unceremoniously left the AP for the Chicago Tribune-New York Daily News Syndicate where he began producing the fabled *Terry and the Pirates*. On October 22, Terry appeared dockside in China with his mentor Pat Ryan, contemplating the mystery and allure of the Orient, and through the next few years, Caniff matured as a cartoonist, honing his artistic and storytelling skills as he explored his medium and expanded its capacities. Then when World War II broke out, he took Terry into

TERRY AND THE PIRATES
SORRY, WE SEEM TO HAVE A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION!
9-7
ZOOMP! - IS CHINEE THUNDER BOLTS!
COAST'S CLEAR TO BEAT IT!
STRIP WHEEZE
STEP ON IT, GANG! THAT BUSH LEAGUE MANDARIN WILL FOLLOW US INTO THE CITY WHEN HE WAKES UP!
NO CAN DO! CONNIE COP ROYAL BRITCHES!
Reg U S Pat Off
Copyright, 1937, by Chicago Tribune-N. Y. News Syndicate, Inc.
MILTON CANIFF

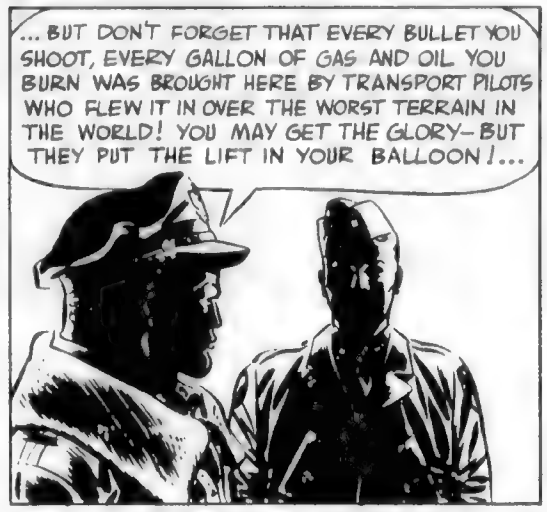
I'M GOING TO MAKE A SPEECH—AND IT'LL BE THE LAST ONE OF ITS KIND IN CAPTIVITY—SO DON'T GET A SHORT CIRCUIT BETWEEN THE EARS...
NO, SIR

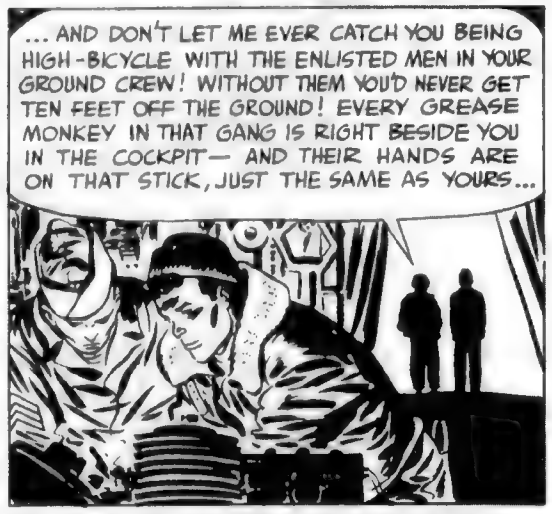

WELL, YOU MADE IT...YOU'RE A FLIGHT OFFICER IN THE AIR FORCES OF THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES...THOSE WINGS ARE LIKE A NEON LIGHT ON YOUR CHEST...I'M NOT GOING TO WAVE THE FLAG AT YOU—BUT SOME THINGS YOU MUST NEVER FORGET...


...EVERY COUNTRY HAS HAD A HAND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AIRPLANE—BUT, AFTER ALL, THE WRIGHT BROTHERS WERE A COUPLE OF DAYTON, OHIO, BOYS—AND KITTY HAWK IS STRICTLY IN NORTH CAROLINA... THE HALLMARK OF THE UNITED STATES IS ON EVERY AIRCRAFT...

...SO YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A POSITION TO DEFEND THE COUNTRY THAT GAVE YOU THE WEAPON WITH WHICH TO DO IT... BUT IT WASN'T JUST YOU WHO EARNED THOSE WINGS...A GHOSTLY ECHELON OF GOOD GUYS FLEW THEIR HEARTS OUT IN OLD KITES TO GIVE YOU THE KNOW-HOW...

...AND SOME SMART SLIDE RULE JOKERS SWEAT IT OUT OVER DRAWING BOARDS TO GIVE YOU A MACHINE THAT WILL KEEP YOU UP THERE SHOOTING... I RECOMMENDED YOU FOR FIGHTER AIRCRAFT AND I WANT YOU TO BE COCKY AND SMART AND PROUD OF BEING A BUZZ-BOY...


...BUT DON'T FORGET THAT EVERY BULLET YOU SHOOT, EVERY GALLON OF GAS AND OIL YOU BURN WAS BROUGHT HERE BY TRANSPORT PILOTS WHO FLEW IT IN OVER THE WORST TERRAIN IN THE WORLD! YOU MAY GET THE GLORY—BUT THEY PUT THE LIFT IN YOUR BALLOON!...


...AND DON'T LET ME EVER CATCH YOU BEING HIGH-BICYCLE WITH THE ENLISTED MEN IN YOUR GROUND CREW! WITHOUT THEM YOU'D NEVER GET TEN FEET OFF THE GROUND! EVERY GREASE MONKEY IN THAT GANG IS RIGHT BESIDE YOU IN THE COCKPIT— AND THEIR HANDS ARE ON THAT STICK, JUST THE SAME AS YOURS...

...YOU'LL GET ANGRY AS THE DEVIL AT THE ARMY AND ITS SO-CALLED RED TAPE...BUT BE PATIENT WITH IT... SOMEHOW THE OLD EAGLE HAS MANAGED TO END UP IN POSSESSION OF THE BALL IN EVERY WAR SINCE 1776—SO JUST HUMOR IT ALONG...
14th AIR FORC
U.S.

OKAY, SPORT, END OF SPEECH...WHEN YOU GET UP IN THAT "WILD BLUE YONDER" THE SONG TALKS ABOUT—REMEMBER, THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD GUYS MISSING FROM MESS TABLES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC, ALASKA, AFRICA, BRITAIN, ASIA AND BACK HOME WHO ARE SORTA COUNTING ON YOU TO TAKE IT FROM HERE!
GOOD NIGHT, KID!

Caniff's patriotic message on Sunday October 17, 1943, was delivered by Flip Corkin to Terry when the latter wins his wings and was so trenchant and true that it was read into the *Congressional Record* by Representative Carl Hinshaw of California.

The entire pre-war cast of *Terry*, drawn late in the strip's Caniff run but before June 1942, when Flip Corkin is introduced.

combat, and before long Caniff's characters were speaking for servicemen everywhere.

After the War, Caniff stunned the cartooning and newspapering fraternities: he left his world-famous strip, abandoned his characters, the children of his successful "marriage" to an adventure strip, in order to create a new strip for a rival syndicate. The Tribune-News Syndicate owned *Terry;* and Caniff wanted ownership of his creation and complete and absolute editorial control. Newspaper mogul Marshall Field gave him both. And Caniff created *Steve Canyon,* which began, after two years' eager anticipation in the trade, on January 13, 1947.

Only a few cartoonists had possession of their own creations in those days. Syndicates owned comic strips, and most cartoonists were indentured to their syndicates. With *Steve Canyon*, Caniff broke free of syndicate shackles and was admired for showing that it was possible to do—and to survive (even thrive). And only two of Caniff's cohorts had ever done what he'd done—left a highly successful feature to start something new. Roy Crane left *Wash Tubbs and Captain Easy* to start *Buz Sawyer* in November 1943; and Gene Ahern had left *Our Boarding House* for *Room and Board* in 1935. But neither Crane nor Ahern was a celebrity like Caniff was at the time, thanks to the role *Terry* had played in building morale around the globe. Caniff's escape from slavery was therefore highly visible, a shining example, a beacon, to the rest of the inky-fingered fraternity.

For over forty of his fifty-five years as a syndicated cartoonist, Caniff's creative energy was poured into *Steve Canyon*. He produced his most acclaimed creation, *Terry and the Pirates*, for only about twelve years. This coupling of facts yields an astonishing realization—that much of Caniff's professional reputation rests on his achievements during those first dozen years.

It was during those years that he made

YELLOW? – I DON'T CARE IF EVERY MAN YOU EVER LOVED SHOWED UP HERE ARMED TO THE TEETH!
YELLOW! YELLOW!
3-20
I WAS TRYIN' TO PROTECT YOU – NOT ME! – DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL?
YELLOW! YELLOW!
I'LL SHUT YOU UP! COME HERE!
OW!
Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.: Copyright, 1936, by Chicago Tribune-N. Y. News Syndicate, Inc.
MILTON CANIFF

When Pat Ryan and Burma met in early 1935, sparks flew.

indelible marks in the history of the comic strip. By 1945, Caniff's work was held in such esteem that when syndicate salesmen began to talk about his new as yet unnamed and undrawn strip, Caniff's name alone was enough to sell the strip. What had Caniff done during the *Terry* years that earned for him such unquestioning acceptance?

In *Terry,* Caniff virtually redefined the adventure continuity strip by raising new standards of excellence for most of the genre's basic ingredients. Adventure strips are distinguished from other types of continuity strips chiefly by the exoticism of the events that take place in them, by the element of high-risk physical danger, and by the realism of story (character and event) and artwork. And it is the artwork—Caniff's graphic technique—that is the most remarked upon of his innovations.

Looking over the shoulder of his studio-mate, Noel Sickles, during the early years and borrowing what he saw there, Caniff developed an impressionistic style of drawing that suggested realism economically with shadow rather than with painstakingly rendered details. At their mature best, his strips were dazzling displays of light and shadow, crisp clear linework drenched in solid blacks, which, in stark contrast to white areas, gave the imagery a powerful visual impact.

To the realism of this graphic technique, Caniff added realism of detail. Seeking absolute authenticity in depicting the setting for *Terry*,

A pre-war grouping with Normandie Drake, the Dragon Lady, and Burma behind Terry, Pat and Connie. The other women are nameless. Caniff, a devoted member of his fraternity, produced this and many other drawings for *Sigma Chi Magazine*; note the fraternity pin on Pat's chest and "Alpha Gamma '30," Caniff's Chapter and the year of his graduation, in his signature block.

Caniff built up a vast file of reference material on the Orient and, later, on military equipment and lore. Caniff's reaction to the expository demands of a storytelling strip (which often results in the words nudging the pictures out of the panels) was to make the words themselves more interesting. He polished the prose of his dialogues, and eventually his characters spoke a sophisticated and crackling patter that suggested with its slangy albeit sometimes grim humor the nonchalance with which his heroes accepted their harrowing roles in life.

As speech balloons grew larger, Caniff sought ways to forestall visual monotony in his panels. More and more, he turned to techniques he saw in films: he shifted his "camera," portraying scenes from different angles and distances. The resultant visual variety restored the verbal-visual balance that heavily laden speech balloons threatened.

But Caniff's signal achievement was as storyteller: he strengthened the fabric of the adventure story when he showed how to entwine into an action-packed plot the threads of character development. His stories invariably created suspense on at least two levels at once: we wanted to know what would happen, and we wanted to know how the people involved would react, develop, change, or grow. To weave into the tapestry of Terry's history two such intriguing characters as the Dragon Lady and Burma, to mention only these two from among many, was to add to the strip's exotic locale a powerful attraction.

This complex of realism and exoticism in character and incident raised the appeal of Caniff's work to the level of mystique. Our fanciful longing for exotic adventure was satisfied in terms so real as to convince us that such adventures were possible, that they had, even, actually happened. Where such dreams are so ably fulfilled, we cannot help but return again and again.

Beginning in 1947, we turned to *Steve Canyon* for the Caniff magic.

The techniques Caniff had perfected in *Terry*, he deployed again in *Steve Canyon*. And he continued to explore the storytelling potential of the medium. An innovation of the middle *Canyon* years, for example, was the repertory concept of rotating adventures among several leading characters. And in 1976, Caniff introduced a fantasy element by having his hero dream himself into adventures in other times and places—the American Revolutionary War, the Civil War, 19th Century Japan, the Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century, and so on.

Were we inclined to poetry, we might see in this development Caniff's return in his dotage to his own youthful creation, the daydreaming Dickie Dare. But when Steve dreams, Caniff laces the fantasies of his slumbers with healthy doses of ironic and anachronistic humor, a sophistication made possible only by the pure confidence of a fully functioning artistic maturity (not to say mastery).

Caniff's stature in the history of the art form arises from yet another fact: the high standards he set admit of emulation. Others strove to match him. And he was not inimitable—not like Segar or Kelly or Herriman or Capp or the rest I named whose lyric effervescence could never be bottled under another label. Caniff—like Crane and Kirby—could be imitated. Successfully. And he could therefore inspire.

So extensively did others mimic him—not just by aping the Sickles/Caniff chiaroscuro drawing technique, but by following Caniff's guide in storytelling mannerisms as well—that Caniff's example effectively set the course for much of the adventure strip genre for decades.

Caniff's eminence in his profession was gained partly through the combined accident of history and timing. In short, he had been lucky. He'd reaped the benefits of being born in 1907 on the cusp of the rising American Century. His sensibilities had developed in step with the rapid growth of mass entertainments of all kinds. He had apprenticed and matured in the media of such entertainments when they were the consuming preoccupation of much of the population—in the American theater during its heyday while he was in college and in newspapering during one of its nearly uncontested periods of omnipresence (that is, when newspapers were one of only two connections the average family made with a world outside, radio being the other).

He had started his most renowned comic strip at the beginning of newspaper cartooning's golden age, and his life and work illustrated and celebrated that epoch. It was as if his talent had been shaped expressly for the medium he chose and the kind of story he told in it: creative energy, sown in the fertile soil of perfectly suitable ground, grew and flourished and, in turn, shaped the medium itself.

He had been blessed with both talent and good luck, but it was hard work that brought both to fruition. By

working hard, he capitalized his blessings into fortune and fame. Caniff lived the American dream of success. And almost everything that had happened to him through his long life of achievement spoke eloquently of the efficacy of that dream.

At crucial turning points in his life, "lucky breaks" seemed to send Caniff in just the right direction. Laid off by the *Columbus Dispatch* when the Depression reached its depths in the winter of 1932, he received—seemingly "out of the blue"—a job offer from the Associated Press to come to New York to join the art staff of the Feature Service. And in the fall of 1934, lightning struck a second time—again under wholly blue skies—in the form of a telephone call summoning him to meet Captain Joseph Patterson of the *New York Daily News*, one of the nation's most powerful press lords. The Captain had an idea for a new kind of comic strip—an adventure strip of realistic swashbuckling—and he wanted Caniff to draw it. And so, *Terry and the Pirates* was conjured up. And then in 1944, Field, a millionaire turned newspaper publisher who was seeking circulation-building comic strips for his *Chicago Sun*, reached out and tapped Caniff, without warning, offering him just what he wanted—sole ownership of the feature and complete, unfettered editorial control—if Caniff would leave the Tribune-News and go with Field Enterprises, the new syndicate Field had established.

Lucky breaks, the legend has it. But they weren't entirely the spontaneous generation of a favoring Fate.

Caniff helped to make some of these breaks. He provided the Columbus AP office with a steady supply of samples of his work, knowing that branch offices were supposed to keep the New York headquarters informed of promising talent in the field. Later, he secured an introduction to Arthur Crawford, head of Patterson's Tribune-News Syndicate, through a famed cartooning fraternity brother, John T. McCutcheon of the *Chicago Tribune*. And that introduction led to the storied phone call

By March 22, 1936, when this Sunday Terry ran, Caniff had become adept at using solid black for shadow. The blacks made the color snap, and every panel leaped off the page.

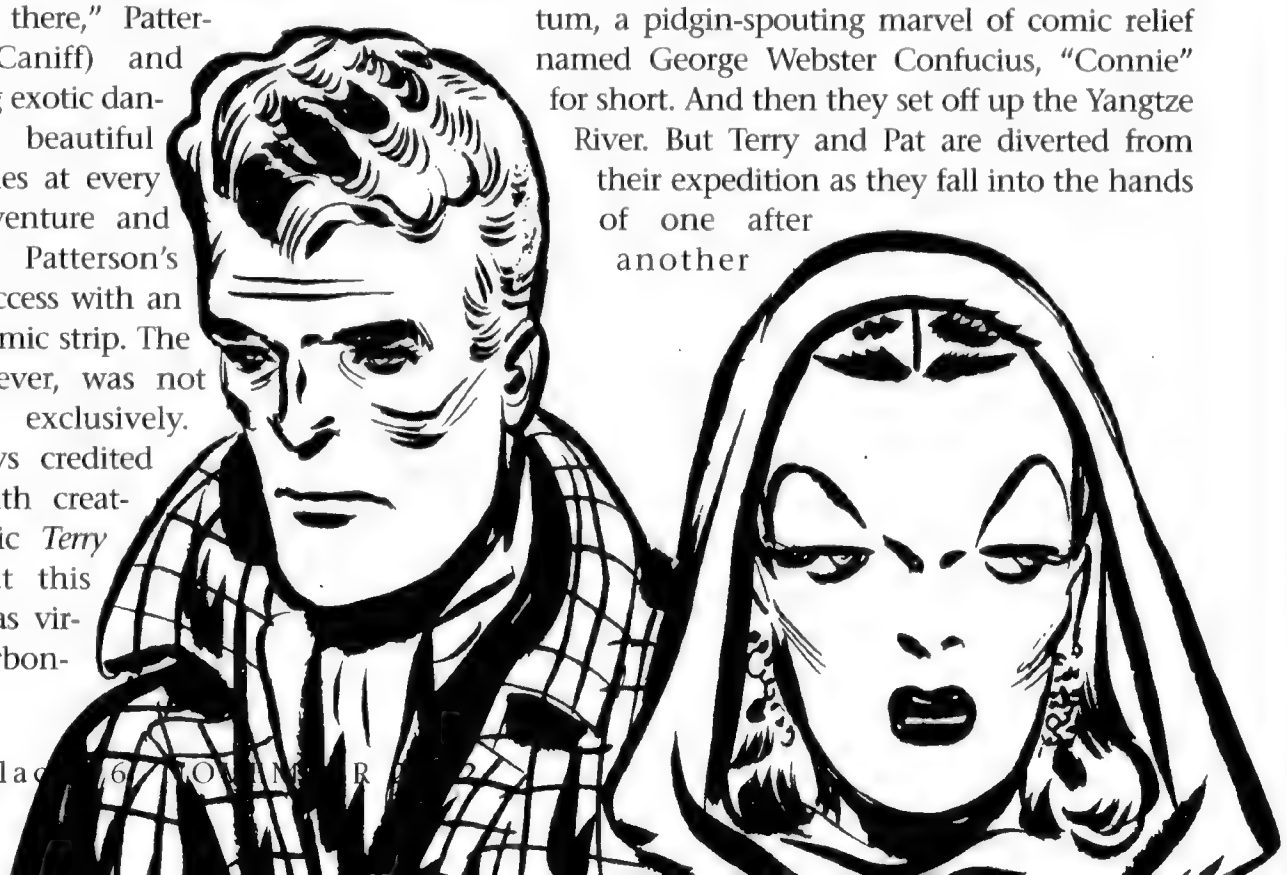
in the fall of 1934. And Field and Caniff had admired each other from a distance for some time before Caniff wrote Field a letter late in 1944, thanking the publisher for making some favorable mention of *Terry* in a speech. The letter opened the door to Field to make the offer that Caniff couldn't refuse.

But no amount of engineering expertise in such matters could have won Caniff the offers he received had he not also possessed the talent to attract the attention he courted. He had the talent. And he was willing to work hard.

According to the legend, *Terry and the Pirates* embodied Patterson's prescription: a kid hero with a rugged and handsome adult mentor, wandering through China ("Anything can still happen out there," Patterson told Caniff) and encountering exotic dangers and beautiful femmes fatales at every pagoda. Adventure and sex appeal, Patterson's recipe for success with an adventure comic strip. The recipe, however, was not Patterson's exclusively. Caniff always credited Patterson with creating the basic *Terry* formula, but this new strip was virtually a carbon-copy of *Dickie Dare*. Dickie's dark hair faded to blond and he became Terry; Dan Flynn's blond hair turned dark, and he became Pat Ryan. Even the Pat Ryan-Normandie Drake unrequited love affair, which Caniff claimed Patterson alerted him to by referring him to *Wuthering Heights*, was blooming in *Dickie* with Dan Flynn and Kim Sheridan. But what wasn't in the earlier strip was the Dragon Lady, undoubtedly Caniff's most inspired (and inspirational) creation (about which, we have more to say elsewhere on these pages in our usual corner, "Funnies Farrago").

Patterson notoriously appended "and the Pirates" to Caniff's list of character-name title suggestions for the strip, and Caniff chaffed a little at the inherent restriction. The strip's title was a plot direction: every story had to be about pirates. And so all the pre-war adventures in *Terry* involved one kind of pirate or another, but in the unsettled almost medieval milieu of China that remained and even flourished after the 1911 collapse of the Manchu Dynasty, the cartoonist was able to find ample material for extending the meaning of "piracy."

In the strip's initial sequence, Pat Ryan, another of those freelance globe-trotting writers, and his charge, Terry Lee, arrive in China on a treasure hunt reminiscent of the sort of thing Roy Crane had been doing in his pace-setting adventure caper, *Wash Tubbs*, since 1924. Caniff's duo acquires a native guide-cook-factotum, a pidgin-spouting marvel of comic relief named George Webster Confucius, "Connie" for short. And then they set off up the Yangtze River. But Terry and Pat are diverted from their expedition as they fall into the hands of one after another

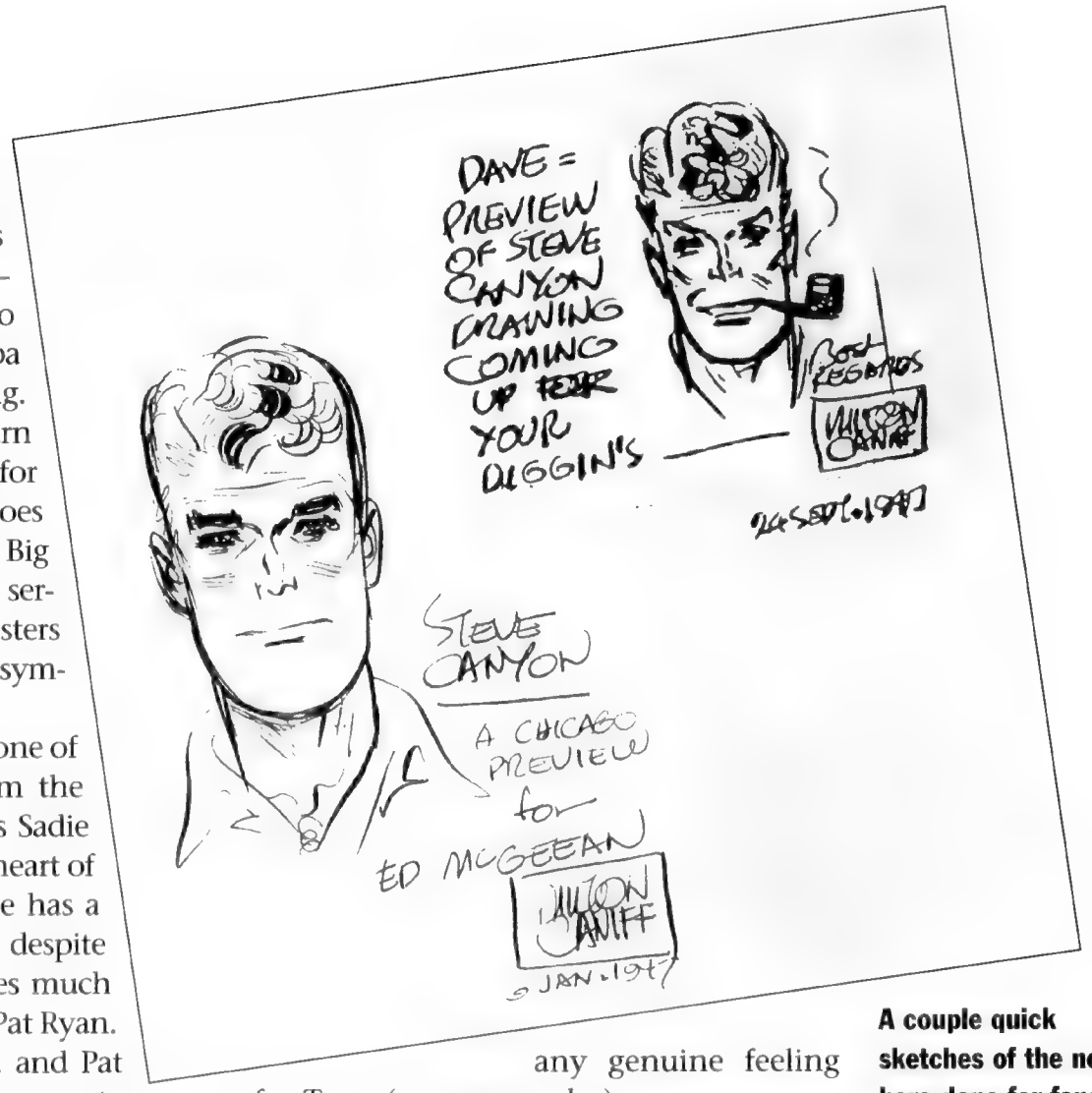


Caniff's new hero, Steve Canyon, was older than Terry and, although blond, was distinguished from his predecessor by a dramatic streak of black hair in his coif. Here, Steve is depicted with Copper Calhoon, "the Copperhead of Wall Street."

of the marauding bands of provincial warlords and other kinds of brigands that infested the Oriental landscape—Captain Blaze, an old reprobate who becomes more friend than foe; Papa Pyzon, Captain Judas, General Klang. And the Dragon Lady, who would return for so many encores as to qualify her for co-star status. Along the way, our heroes acquire another Chinese servant in Big Stoop, a mute giant whose silent loyal service in righting the wrongs his masters might otherwise endure gives him the symbolic function of an avenging Fate.

And then there was Burma. During one of the Dragon Lady's brief absences from the early continuity, Caniff introduced his Sadie Thompson character, a bad girl with a heart of gold. Burma has no last name but she has a past—something vaguely illegal—and despite the gold-digging motive than animates much of her endeavor, she falls for penniless Pat Ryan. She craves a strong man as protector, and Pat Ryan is the strongest man around those parts. She, too, drifted in and out of the strip as Caniff returned to examine her character again and again.

Meanwhile, Pat Ryan meets and falls in love with his Catherine, Normandie Drake. And, later, Terry meets his paramour in April Kane, a Southern belle patterned somewhat on Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, a novel that had taken the country by storm just about the time the cartoonist needed a young female of the species to knock Terry off his adolescent feet. But Normandie marries the craven Anthony Sandhurst, and Pat is forever frustrated in love; and April is simply too much a belle to reveal any genuine feeling for Terry (or anyone else).


DAVE = PREVIEW OF STEVE CANYON DRAWING COMING UP FOR YOUR DIGGIN'S
STEVE CANYON
A CHICAGO PREVIEW for ED McGEEAN
MILTON CANIFF
3 JAN. 1947

A couple quick sketches of the new hero done for fans.

With this colorful array of character and incident, Caniff more than fulfilled Patterson's prescription. He exceeded it. In the grip of congenial material, he did much more with Patterson's suggestions than the Captain could have anticipated.

Caniff reached the pinnacle of his fame during World War II. *Terry* was the first American comic strip to take its characters into the War. In the strip, Terry joined the Army Air Corps (Air Force), and one of Caniff's stellar creations of the period was the pilot who teaches Terry to fly, Flip Corkin, a wise-cracking ace (with the emphasis on both "wise" and "cracking") deliberately patterned after an Ohio State chum named Phil Cochran. Pat Ryan faded away during the war years, and Flip Corkin took his place, becoming one of the most popular comic strip characters of the era.

NO — I MUST ST--
...NEVER ARGUE WITH A STUBBORN DAME, REEDY!
PICK UP YOUR LITTLE CHUM AND WE'LL TRY OUT THIS TUNNEL OF LOVE!
BUT, MR. HOGAN, SHE'S PRINCESS SNOW FLOWER OF DAMMA!
AND I AM THE SULTAN OF SURABACHI!

In these two excerpted (non-sequential) panels, Doagie Hogan, American fiction's only disfigured misanthropic adventure hero, doesn't hesitate about clipping a girl on the jaw even if she's a princess. The kid is Reed Kimberly.

Caniff's sympathetic and knowing treatment of life in the armed services championed the achievements of men and women in American uniforms

January 1947

March 1947

SHE RAN THE HOME OFFICE OF HORIZONS UNLIMITED— WHEN WE HAD ONE...THEY NEED GOOD SECRETARIES OUT HERE, SO —
YOU KNOW SHE'S IN LOVE WITH YOU, DON'T YOU?

January 1948

THAT'S SO SHE WON'T GIVE US AWAY TO THE OPPOSITION UNDERGROUND BY SOME CHANCE RE---- SAY, WHAT ARE YOU GRINNING ABOUT?...
MILTON CANIFF

January 1948

January 1949

January 1949

July 1948

July 1948

July 1948

May 1948

everywhere. His regular readers in the armed forces numbered hundreds of thousands: the understanding for their task and their situation that they found portrayed in *Terry* eased the overseas ordeals they all endured. Many felt Caniff was their stateside public relations representative, an American Kipling.

The Sunday strip that records Flip Corkin's lecture to Terry when the youth gets his wings so incisively captured the wartime spirit of the period that it was read into the *Congressional Record* to become a part of that national archive. And civilian readers—almost all of whom had relatives in uniform—found that the strip brought them closer to their distant loved ones. *Terry's* trenchant, pragmatic patriotism warmed hearts and steeled nerves on the home front and at the battlefront. The strip was one of the most widely read of its day. And most of those who didn't read it nonetheless knew about it. Milton Caniff's name in those years was as familiar to many as Douglas MacArthur's.

His popularity and visibility among servicemen was further augmented by another comic strip—*Male Call*, which he drew without remuneration for distribution to camp newspapers published by the armed forces. *Male Call* he drew strictly for enlisted readers in the military, no family strip, this. And the bit of lace that figured prominently in its panels was the most conspicuous of Caniff's many contributions to the war effort. Physically ineligible for military service due to phlebitis, the cartoonist went to war with Miss Lace, an unabashed assault on low morale. The strip was immensely popular: it was printed regularly in over 3,000 service publications, the highest circulation number ever attained by any comic strip before or since.

When *Steve Canyon* was launched, Caniff was at the height of his fame and popularity, and the new strip hove into public view on the crest of a wave of unequaled ballyhoo, the culmination of a promotional campaign unique in both its length and content. The campaign was not intended to last as long as it did, but the news of Caniff's defection from *Terry* leaked in early 1945, when the cartoonist still had two years to go on his Tribune-News contract, and the resultant gossip in the industry effectively created more publicity and avid expectation than even Caniff, no slouch at promoting his strips, could have engineered.

Since he was leaving the Tribune-News Syndicate chiefly to gain control and complete ownership of his new strip, Caniff would do nothing during that two-year period to endanger his future proprietary rights: he didn't draw a line on the new strip until his old contract expired on October 15, 1946. Then he had less than a month to create a new cast of characters and to get strips into production for the debut date early in January 1947. (And, unwilling to leave *Terry* without providing a suitable "conclusion" to his stewardship of his own creations, he worked beyond the contracted termination date, further reducing the time he had to prepare the new venture. See sidebar.) Caniff knew exactly what he wanted for his adventure strip. His hero would be a "continuation" of Terry—an older, more mature Terry.

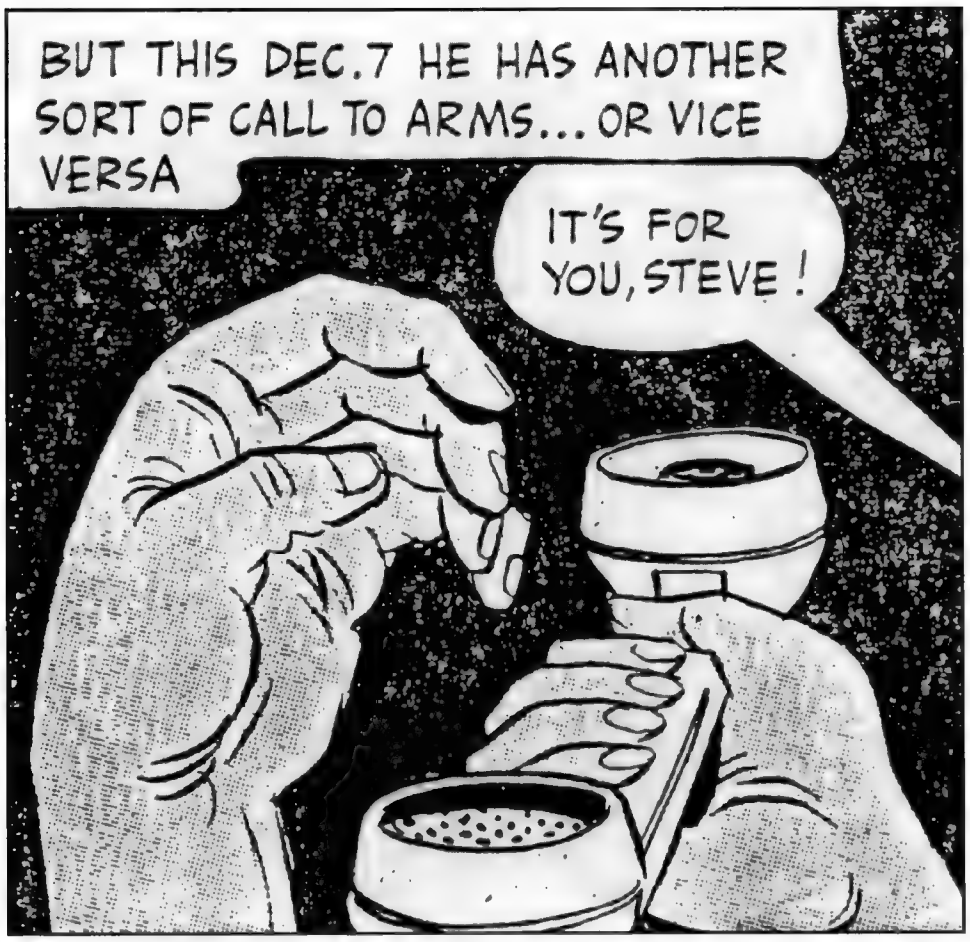
His last *Terry* daily strip appeared on Saturday, December 28; the last Sunday, one of his most memorable pages, the next day. On Monday, *Terry's* fate was taken over by George Wunder, another AP alum, who had won a competition for the job. Meanwhile, Caniff's new syndicate, having nothing of the new strip to display to prospective subscribing newspapers, sold it solely on the basis of its creator's reputation. And that was apparently enough for an unprecedented number of editors: of the 234 newspapers that carried the inaugural sequence of *Steve Canyon*, 162 had bought the feature before seeing even the earliest promotional drawings of the characters that appeared only seven weeks previously.

For almost two years, the journalistic and cartooning fraternities as well as the general newspaper-reading public had been waiting for Caniff's new creation. But even with the strip's debut, Caniff continued to deny his audience a glimpse of the character they'd been waiting to see: perhaps indulging an impish (not to say perverse) sense of humor, the cartoonist built suspense during the strip's first week through the chancy device of keeping his hero off-stage. What readers finally saw at week's end was a tall, lean, square-jawed, hawk-nosed worldly-wise soldier of fortune. In personality, he was a more mature Terry, but Caniff had taken pains to make him look markedly different, giving him a theatrical dark streak in his blond hair—a feature of his appearance that excited great comment in the promotional materials.

Deliberately contrived to appeal to post-War readers, Canyon was an ex-Army Transport Command pilot, and, like thousands of other veterans, he had set himself up in business, operating his own cargo airline. It was an enterprise that gave Canyon the plausible excuse he needed to go anywhere to do anything, and it had a name that rang with the romantic resonance of adventure—Horizons Unlimited.

Although Caniff consciously guarded against repeating himself in the new strip, he attempted to recreate the *Terry* mystique at the onset by confronting Canyon with a femme fatale as powerful and unscrupulous in financial circles as the Dragon Lady had been in the China Sea. Even Copper Calhoon's

A page of Canyons. Caniff began modifying Steve Canyon's appearance almost at once. He was too lean, the cartoonist felt, for rough-and-tumble action, so he arranged for Canyon to gain a little weight (and Steve's neck gets thicker in consequence by July 1948). And the black streak in his hair starts to fade. In 1948, as a stunt, Caniff drew Canyon as a retired adventurer, reading his paper and smoking his pipe in peace before the crackling fireplace (lower right panel), and by then, Canyon's black streak had turned gray. That's Deen Wilderness in the first January 1948 panel; Feeta Feeta in the second. Happy Easter is in the panels for July 1948; Reed Kimberly, January 1949.



Steve Canyon, like Pat Ryan before him, romanced the women, but he also (like Ryan with Normandie Drake) became seriously involved with one of the women (Summer Smith Olson) very early in the strip's run. Thereafter, Steve's affairs of the heart were fairly chaste "on screen." But once, in the winter of 1969, Caniff let us know that Steve had an active sex life, regardless of where Summer might be, forever holding out on him. The signal came on a Sunday when Steve gets a phone call, and all we see is a distinctly feminine hand passing the phone to him. In the next panel, we see that Steve is in bed although his female companion doesn't appear in the picture. A model of discretionary message-sending.

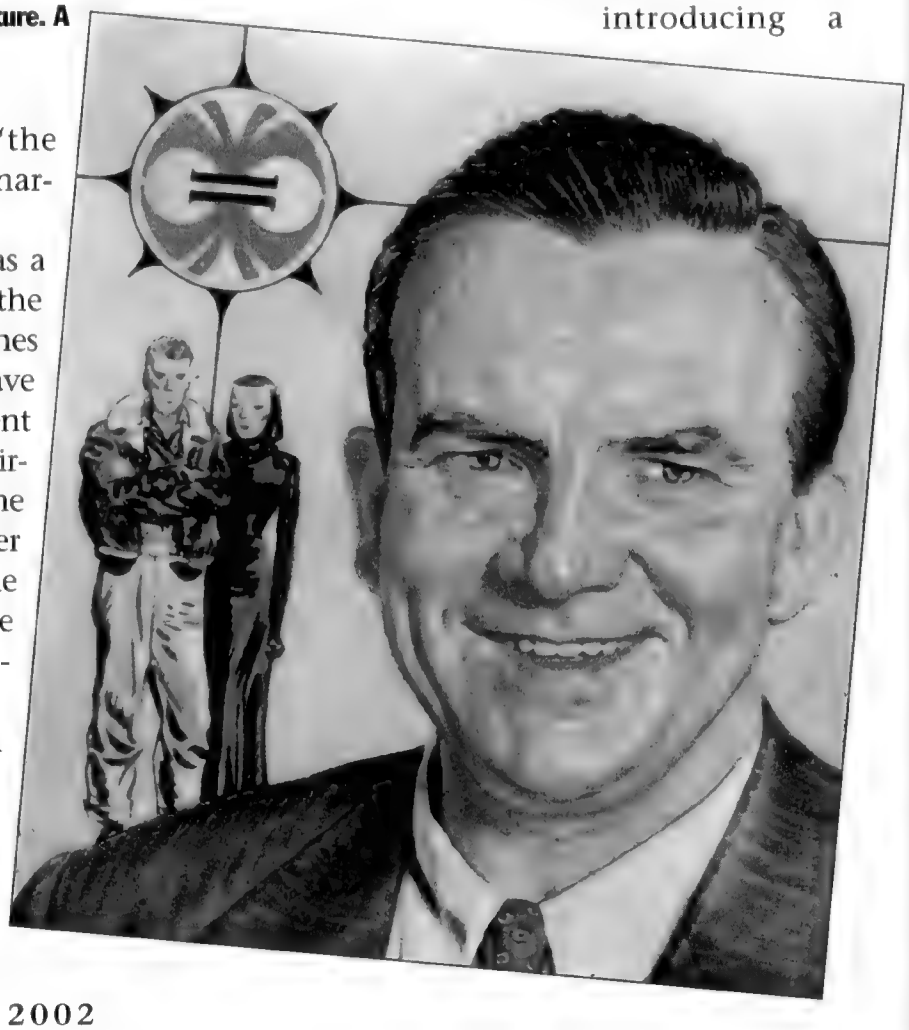
nickname on Wall Street, "the Copperhead," evoked the serpentine character of her predecessor.

Steve Canyon himself was conceived as a modern sophisticated incarnation of the plainsman of the American West ("airplanes man" the publicity punned), and Caniff gave him a grizzled old-timer sidekick reminiscent of the stock character Gabby Hayes had virtually invented in Western movies. With the old would-be Seventh Cavalry trooper Happy Easter at his side, Canyon spent the next four years barn-storming around the globe in a loping saga of footloose adventure.

And Caniff waylaid his hero with an array of fascinating friends and foes: the pneumatic Madame Lynx and the mysterious Maid of Nine were aspects of the Dragon Lady; Delta and Fancy, of Burma; but the anti-hero Doagie Hogan paired with the innocent idealist Princess Snowflower were original conceptions. And in Summer Smith, Steve met the woman he would court for eighteen years before marrying (a case of unrequited love the duration of which equaled Daisy Mae's more publicized wait for Li'l Abner).

Still, Caniff felt something was missing, so in 1950, he added the youth Reed Kimberly to his cast, intending to have Canyon play mentor to the boy as Pat Ryan had to Terry. But when the Korean War broke out, Caniff abandoned that plan. Instead, Canyon reenlisted in the Air Force, and from that time on, *Steve Canyon* was a military strip; henceforth, Canyon's adventures took place in military settings and with such an authentic representation of the military point of view that he became an unofficial spokesman for the Air Force. While military custom inhibited Canyon's free-wheeling style somewhat (and a regulation haircut muted the melodrama of the dark streak in his hair), he could still rescue such damsels in distress as the provocative Miss Mizzou, who showed up in the North Woods wearing nothing under her trench coat.

Caniff continued to practice the tricks and tropes of storytelling that he had perfected in *Terry*. And in 1956, he once again sought to appeal to a youthful audience, this time introducing a



Cover of *Time* magazine the week *Steve Canyon* debuted.

teenage girl, Poteet Canyon, Steve's "kissin' cousin" and his ward, who would dog her guardian's steps for the rest of the strip's run, her adolescent infatuation for him never fading. Featuring Poteet as a college student and then as a journalist, he deftly shifted the focus of the strip to hold reader interest with topical stories, playing variations on the theme most prevalent in his work—loyalty, in both its personal and patriotic forms. But during the Vietnam War, he underestimated momentarily the extent of anti-war sentiment in the country.

Caniff's fatal misstep in this regard is perhaps scarcely surprising; but there is in it an irony of classical proportions. His career and life enacted the American dream—establishing its efficacy in his mind and creating thereby his hubris. He proved that hard work and talent can yield success, and during World War II, the patriotism he infused into *Terry* inspired both soldiers at the front and their families at home and brought Caniff unprecedented fame. But when he sought to invoke the same spirit during the Vietnam War in *Steve Canyon,* he inspired only virulent protest, and newspapers canceled the strip by the score.

When readers objected to his hawkish stand in the strip, Caniff recovered by taking Canyon out of uniform to serve the Air Force as a special agent in mufti. And in 1971, while in a Scandinavian country on a mission, Steve and Summer (now his wife) encounter a number of Americans who have deserted the U.S. Army while in Europe. When Summer asks him if he's bitter about the deserters, Steve says:

"Summer, I'm not bitter about *anything.* When an individual knows the cost of a personal action, then does it—that's his business. George Washington and Robert E. Lee were considered deserters and traitors in their day. These men who are AWOL because they object to Vietnam may be heroes at some future time."

For Caniff, Steve's statement was nearly a ringing endorsement of the Vietnam protest, but hardly anyone heard it. By then, the strip's circulation was irreparably damaged: it never regained the circulation it had enjoyed at the peak of its popularity in the late fifties when, with a *Steve Canyon* television series boosting the strip's popularity, it was running in over 600 papers. Not even when Caniff introduced Oley—Summer's son by her first marriage, now Steve's stepson and another member of the rotating cast—with his drug addiction and other contemporary hang-ups, could the cartoonist bring back readers.

STEVE CANYON
BY MILTON CANIFF
LOOK, STEVE CANYON, MY JOB IS TO SET UP HEALTH CONTROL CENTERS IN THE AREAS WHICH ARE BEING DEVELOPED BY AMERICANS!
AND IT COULDN'T HAPPEN TO A NICER KID!...
THEN WHO IS GIVING THE ORDERS AS TO WHEN AND WHERE THESE MEDICAL SUPPLIES ARE TO GO?
DR. DEEN WILDERNESS, THE PRETTIEST LADY SAWBONES OUTSIDE OF THE MOVIES!
...THE ONLY CATCH IS THAT YOU'RE SO OPPOSED TO INFECTION THAT YOU THINK EVERYBODY FEELS THE SAME...
WELL...
THERE ARE SOME VERY ARDENT GENTLEMEN WHO DON'T WANT YOUR PROJECT TO SUCCEED — NO MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE DIE!
I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS...
STEVE! LOOK AT THAT TRUCK!
THE DRIVER'S HEADING RIGHT FOR THE AIRPLANE LOADED WITH YOUR MEDICAL STUFF!
SUCH AN OLD STORY — AMERICANS MIXING IN OTHER PEOPLES' AFFAIRS AND GAINING NOTHING BUT A TRIP TO A CLEANING ESTABLISHMENT...

Caniff's use of solid black, always dramatic, was particularly stunning in the early years of *Steve Canyon*, when, as in these examples, his shadowing technique approaches silhouette.

Despite his diminished audience, Caniff took the same painstaking care he'd always taken in researching and writing and drawing. Even when newspaper reproduction became lousier and lousier, reducing his drawings smaller and smaller until they could scarcely be deciphered with the naked eye, he attended carefully to every picture he made, maintaining his passion for authenticity in the smallest visual details. And he remained a perfectionist until he could no longer work on the strip, until mid-January 1988, when

STEVE CANYON
MILTON CANIFF
OH, GLORY! OL' HAPPY PLUMB DISREMEMBERED THAT THIS HERE BUCKET FOLDS UP LIKE A A-CORDEEN SO'S SHE KIN DIVE AS A SUBMARINE!
PLACE THE OLD CHATTERER BESIDE CANYON... IT IS PROPER THAT THEY TRY ON THESE GARMENTS TOGETHER!
ARE YOU MEN IN MY CREW FAMILIAR WITH THE WRITINGS OF THE FRENCHMAN DUMAS?.—NO? GOOD! FAR TOO BOURGEOIS FOR THE VANGUARD OF A NEW ORDER
IN HIS "COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO" A MAN IS SEWED ALIVE INTO A BURIAL SHROUD AND THROWN INTO THE SEA!
ARE THE BURIAL SHROUDS FOR CANYON AND EASTER PROPERLY WEIGHTED TO SINK FROM SIGHT AT ONCE?
AYE, MY CAPTAIN!
IS THE SAILMAKER STANDING BY WITH HIS GEAR?
AYE, MY CAPTAIN!
THEN LET THE GIRL CHILD STEP FORWARD SO SHE MAY BETTER VIEW THE PROCEEDING
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TO DO, CONVOY?
Y-YES, MADAME CAPTAIN
YOU HEARD ME! ... ALIVE!
PLACE CANYON AND EASTER IN THE WEIGHTED CANVAS BAGS WE CARRY FOR BURIALS AT SEA
SEW THEM UP AND THROW THEM OVER THE SIDE! WELL, DON'T STARE! DO AS I SAY!
AT ONCE, MY CAPTAIN!
IT WOULD BE A TENDER TOUCH IF THEIR DEVOTED GIRL FRIEND WERE TO WIELD THE NEEDLE! DO IT, CHILD!
OH, NO!

In this 1948 sequence, a female Russian submarine captain (who's dubbed "Shark" but whose manner is more dragon-like than fishy) throws Steve and Happy Easter overboard, alive but sewn into canvas bags. Soaking his drawings in shadowy black, Caniff provokes a menacing mood, which he then augments by indicating that an ill wind is blowing (note the Shark's hair). Despite the murderous speeches, the Shark, like the Dragon Lady, can't bear to kill off the handsome American and arranges with the waif Convoy to put liberating knives into the hands of our heroes. Meanwhile, the Shark has re-established with her crew her reputation for ruthlessness, a reputation as essential to her effective functioning as it had been in bygone times with the Dragon Lady.

he went into the hospital with cancer.

For the first twenty years or so of his syndicated career, Caniff did all the drawing as well as the writing for his strips, employing an assistant only for lettering. In the mid-fifties, he took on a drawing assistant, Richard Rockwell, who penciled the strips, which Caniff then inked. It was the inking that gave the artwork its distinctive appearance, Caniff knew; and inks could betray a ghost if there was one. Moreover, by performing the inking chores, Caniff got "the final cut" (as he termed it, resorting to filmmaker's lingo), the last opportunity to modify each strip. And Caniff often took that opportunity, sometimes re-doing entire panels—changing their composition, adding people to crowd scenes, and the like. When, after nearly four decades on the strip, Frank Engli retired from lettering in the seventies, that part of the task was taken over by a long-time Caniff admirer and friend, Shel Dorf.

Caniff's survival into the 1980s was not so much a miracle as it was testimony to his cunning as an entertainer. Joke-a-day comic strips had slowly taken over the comics pages in newspapers, beginning in the 1950s as newspaper editors took the oddly self-defeating position that since readers could get a whole story on television in an hour, why would they want to read a story in the comics that would take six to nine weeks to complete? The steady durability of soap operas on TV, stories that continued for months, did nothing, apparently, to dissuade newspaper satraps of the wrong-headedness of their conviction. And their error was the death knell for adventure strips. As comedy thrived in the funnies, adventure strips—and continuity strips generally—faded away. Caniff, watching these developments, gradually increased the humor content of the strip to match the competition. Humor had always been a vital ingredient, but in the last decades of *Steve Canyon*, Caniff made sure every strip concluded with some sort of punch line—just like those gag strips that surrounded his on every side.

He also simplified his drawings, so they would survive the increasingly severe reduction comic strips faced, and his plots, so he could tell stories in less time.

After Canyon's marriage in 1970 to Summer, Caniff often featured the couple as a team in light-comedy mysteries like Mr. and Mrs. North of the old radio program. But Summer had inexplicably left her husband when the strip ended in June 1988. Written and drawn by Rockwell during Caniff's final two-month illness, the strip could not survive its creator's passing. He died on Easter Sunday, April 3, 1988. For his many fans, it was not a happy Easter. By the time of his hospitalization, something Caniff had drawn had been in print every weekday continually for nearly 55 years, every Sunday for 53 years—a publication record without equal for an artist.

Caniff lived the American success story dream, and he was also something of an American ideal in himself. In his beliefs and

behavior, he epitomized the traditional American values of hard work, honesty, decency, fair play and pragmatic common sense. And loyalty—loyalty perhaps most of all. He married his high school sweetheart, Esther "Bunny" Parsons, and stayed married to her all his life. He once told me that a man should so live his life and conduct himself with others that he could always part company with a warm handshake all around.

Caniff was unpretentious and amiable. When I met him at his 75th birthday celebration at Ohio State University in 1982, I'd been following his strips and admiring his work all my life, and I was nearly overwhelmed by the prospect of meeting him in person at last. But Caniff's easy familiarity and warm acceptance quickly dispelled my awkwardness.

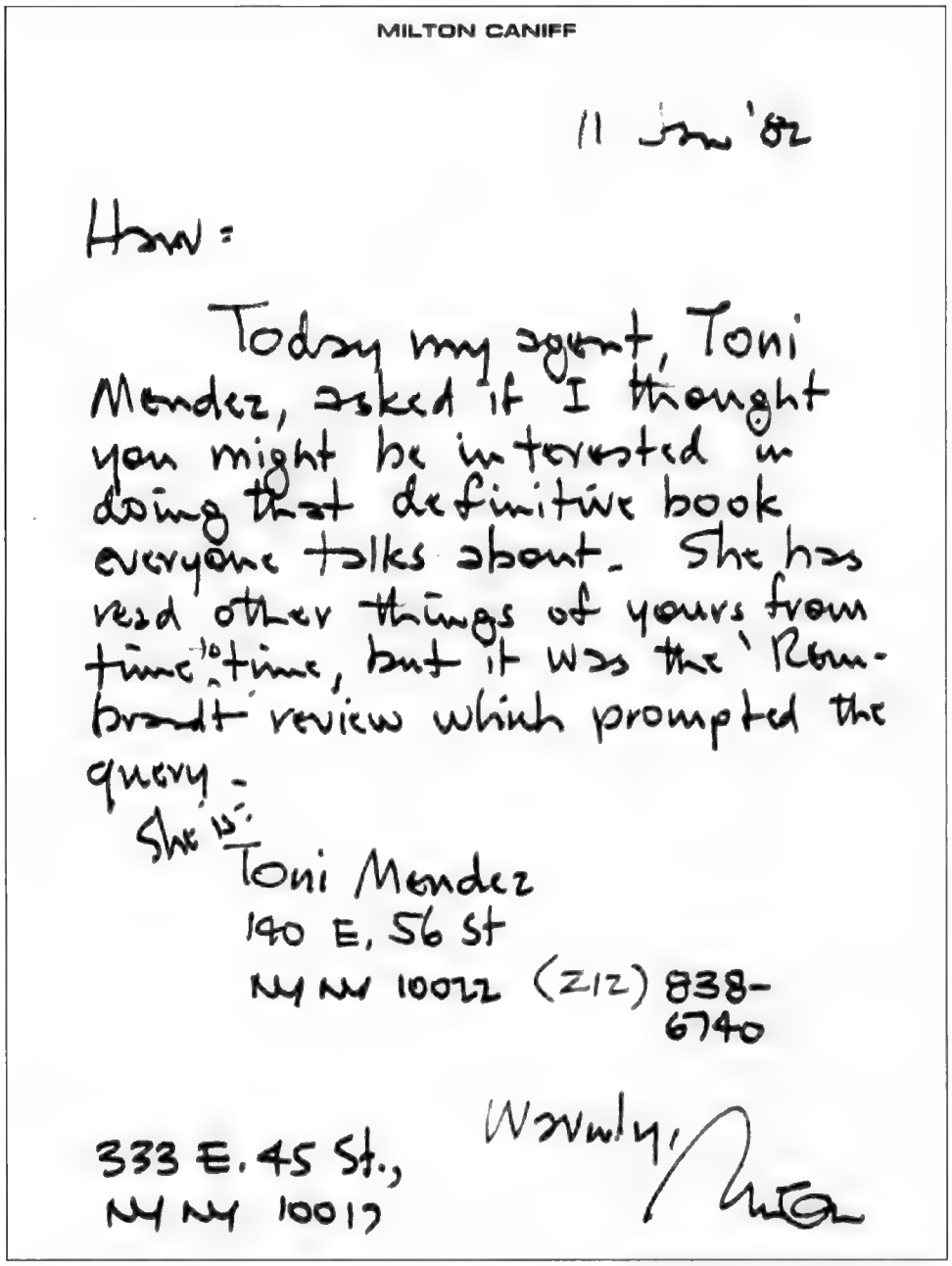
The more work I did with him in writing his biography, the more I was struck by the man's modesty. There was nothing false about it: he knew he was good at what he did. "In some respects," he told one interviewer, "I'm the best at what I do."

In "some respects."

In a lengthy interview with Arn Saba (which is reprinted in full in *Milton Caniff Conversations*), Caniff elaborated a little more: "I think I have taken as great an advantage as I could out of everything that was within my range," he told Saba. "I'm not the best artist in the business. I'm not the best—whatever. But I know how to put what skills I have together in such a way that they will sell. I'm fortunate in that when I fell into a slot, it was the kind of thing that I did best."

To get him to say this much, Saba had to push him relentlessly. In ordinary discourse—and even in answering my specific questions—he played down his role in any enterprise, distributing credit to others. He was one of the founders of the National Cartoonists Society, but more

Caniff with the Dragon Lady on his drawing board. Photo by Shel Dorf.


MILTON CANIFF

11 Jan '82

Hiya:

Today my agent, Toni Mendez, asked if I thought you might be interested in doing that definitive book everyone talks about. She has read other things of yours from time to time, but it was the 'Rembrandt' review which prompted the query.

She is:
Toni Mendez
140 E. 56 St
NY NY 10022 (212) 838-6740

Warmly,

333 E. 45 St.,
NY NY 10017

In 1982, Milton Caniff invited Harvey to write the "definitive biography." Said Harvey: "When I opened the letter, a paroxysm of exuberance followed immediately. My wife had to pry me off the ceiling. Naturally, I accepted the invitation. It seemed to me that much of what I'd done in my life up to then had prepared me for this task." And for the next eight years, he worked on the project, alternately interviewing Caniff and writing in his spare time (while also holding down a regular 40-plus-hour-a-week job). The typescript was completed in 1989, but, at 1,800 pages, it was too much for any publisher to undertake. Harvey is now about to attempt reducing the package to a more publishable size, but since finishing the first draft of the Caniff book, he has authored several books on cartooning, among them: *The Art of the Funnies* (An Aesthetic History of the Newspaper Comic Strip), *The Art of the Comic Book* (An Aesthetic History), *Accidental Ambassador Gordo: The Comic Strip Art of Gus Arriola* (all from the University Press of Mississippi), *The Children of the Yellow Kid: The Evolution of the American Comic Strip* (University of Washington). Most recently, Harvey compiled and edited *Milton Caniff Conversations*, a collection of previously published interviews with Caniff culled from Harvey's extensive files; from University Press of Mississippi (1-800-737-7788 or www.upress.state.ms.us), $18 paper, $46 in unjacketed hardcover. All these books are available through Harv's website, www.RCHarvey.com, the only source of autographed and inscribed copies.

than that, he was the "glue" that held it together. He and his secretary and Engli produced the Society's newsletter for years, and he was always first to see an opportunity for publicizing the organization—a cartooning dignitary in town, a gallery showing, a charity benefit, anything that would give photographers a picture and cartoonists visibility. And yet, in describing the maturation of the Society, he referred to the contributions of others, not himself.

I asked *New York Times* political columnist James Reston about Caniff's unassuming manner—unassuming, often, to the point of self-effacement. Reston, who had known the cartoonist since their high school days together in Dayton, Ohio, said: "That's just a symbol of a generous and modest man. That's part of his character. That's what he learned from his father and mother in that little town in Ohio [where he was born, Hillsboro]—not to blow his own horn."

"Has he always been like that?" I asked. "Or am I seeing a personality mellowed with years of experience and fame?"

"He's been like that all his life," Reston said. "Usually as people get old, the qualities they had when they were young really become more apparent. And Milt always had those qualities."

Caniff was always ready to help aspiring cartoonists (even established ones) with advice and criticism. With the passage of years, he became, as cartoonist Mel Casson once said, "mentor to an entire profession." And the members of that profession were grateful and appreciative.

Reston saw it when he accompanied Caniff to an NCS event once. "There was a kind of adoration for Milt by the young people," he told me. "And I assume that indicates his kindliness, too."

I once asked Caniff what were his greatest satisfactions.

"I don't think there's been anything that reached the peak of Terry getting his wings and the play that it got—being read into the *Congressional Record*," he said. "That has to be the Number One. But there were others—oh, getting honorary degrees, for instance, from schools such as the Atlanta Law School and Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. I had no connection whatever with Rollins College, so it was just a straight out-and-out compliment. And having an exhibit (with other NCS members) at the Louvre was a big one, too."

To those satisfactions, I'm sure he could add hundreds of others—all those people, surely, from whom he was able to part with a warm handshake.

STEVE CANYON
by MILTON CANIFF
WHY, IT'S STEVIE CANYON! ME SISTER IN SHANNON WRITES THAT YE PAID HER A PERSONAL CALL!
THAT I DID! SHE LOOKS FINE!
GLAD TO SEE YOU BACK, MR. CANYON! MY BOY GOT THE SOUVENIR YOU SENT FROM EGYPT!
GOOD!
CHECKING IN, SARGE!
CAPTAIN CANYON! I REALLY SWEAT YOU OUT THIS LAST TRIP! HEY! I HAVE A FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YOU...YOU'LL NEVER REGRET HAVING BACKED ME ON THIS DEAL!...
WANT A FLOWER FOR YOUR BUTTONHOLE, MR. CANYON?
NOT TODAY, POSIE — BUT YOU AND YOUR MOM ARE ABOUT DUE TO SEE A MOVIE ON ME...
GOING UP?
THIS CAR, MR. CANYON! —AND FOR YOU WE DON'T WAIT TILL IT'S FULL! RIGHT, IRMA?
R-R-RAJAH!
OH... HERE IS MR. CANYON, NOW...
HORIZONS Unlimited
IT'S A MR. DAYZEE, SECRETARY TO COPPER CALHOON, THE BIG SHE-WOLF OF THE STOCK MARKET...
HMM—THEY CALL HER "THE COPPERHEAD" I WONDER IF SHE HOWLS OR HISSES?
MR. CANYON?... MISS COPPER CALHOON WISHES TO ENGAGE YOUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES! PLEASE COME TO MISS CALHOON'S APARTMENT AT ONCE...
...BUT WHAT IF I DON'T WANT TO PLACE MY SERVICES AT THE COMMAND OF MISS COPPER CALHOON?
MIS-TER CANYON! PEOPLE DO NOT REFUSE WHEN SUMMONED BY COPPER CALHOON!
AND ALL THIS TIME I THOUGHT I WAS A PEOPLE! GOOD MORROW, MR. DOOZIE!
WHY, MR. DIZZY, WHAT YOU SAID!..AND ME SO YOUNG AND IMPRESSIONABLE! ...THE CLICK YOU HEAR WILL MEAN YOU'RE SOLOING!
WELL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE TO HAVE MONEY TO PAY THIS OFFICE RENT BUT I GUESS IT'S BAD FORM TO GET INTO REGULAR HABITS LIKE THAT...
COPPER! YOU HEARD ON THE EXTENSION WHAT STEVE CANYON SAID!.. I HAVE NEVER BEEN SO—
I WANT THAT MAN!! ...GET HIM!
1-19

The first *Steve Canyon* Sunday. Caniff kept his readers in suspense all the previous week, postponing Steve's debut until the seventh day. And Caniff was as proud of this page as he was of his last *Terry* Sunday.

[continued from page 49]

achievement of *Terry*—representing as sharp a break with the past as it did—was never quite equaled. *Steve Canyon* was good; it was very good: Caniff, after all, was doing it, and it benefited from all his talent and experience and his cultivated instincts as a storyteller. And he scarcely let himself rest on his laurels. Sheer competition for space on the funnies page in newspapers that were continually on the look-out for new strips, not to mention professional pride, kept him at it: as he used to say, "When you feel the buckshot on your behind, you run faster." But the contrast between *Steve Canyon* and *Terry* was not as pronounced, not as dramatic, as it was between *Terry* and everything that had gone before. So *Steve Canyon*, despite its longer run as a Caniff creation, always seems the lesser of the two as a creative enterprise.

Still, the two strips were not, really, two separate creations. *Steve Canyon* was, as Caniff himself acknowledged, a continuation of *Terry*. Steve was a slightly more mature Terry, the character Terry was already turning into in the post-war *Terry*. The two strips are actually one, and while the web is not seamless, it is long—over half-a-century long, a saga of almost epic proportions. It may not chronicle the deeds of people who shaped the fate of their nation, but it mirrors the social history of that nation during epoch-making times. In its earliest chapters, the narrative was clearly inspired; in the latter years, it was a virtuoso performance. The first years were inspired by the energy of the creator's experimentation and self-discovery; the latter years were infused with his technical dexterity and storytelling savvy. Altogether, his was a long and distinguished performance, without equal in either dimension.

If Caniff had any regrets about leaving *Terry*, he didn't have time to indulge them in November 1946 as he was ringing down the curtain on his last act with the strip. He had too much to do. He had only about two weeks before his first deadline with his new syndicate. A Sunday page was falling due. And he had to invent a hero and a raison d'etre for him, a supporting case, a milieu. An entire world. And only a fortnight for creating it. Caniff picked up a pencil and smiled; he had been there before.

The foregoing is from the typescript of Meanwhile: The Life and Art of Milton Caniff, *an unpublished biography by R.C. Harvey.*

Andy Kubert:
A Chip Off the Old Rock

Inspiration Central

by Bill Baker

Saying that Andy Kubert is possessed of some of the most respected roots in comics could be considered a bit of hyperbole. But not by much, particularly when you consider that Joe Kubert, the justly celebrated and revered artist, writer and teacher, is his father. It almost seems fated that both Andy and brother Adam would choose to follow in their father's footsteps to become celebrated creators and teachers of comic book art in their own right. That both of the Kubert boys have made good on their promise almost goes without saying, but Andy's recent contribution to the long-awaited Wolverine: Origin *miniseries proved to be a real breakthrough for him, artistically as well as commercially, and only served to further establish him as one of the more prominent pencilers in Marvel's stable. Currently, Andy is working on Neil Gaiman's top-secret project for Marvel,* 1602, *due sometime in 2003.*

Comic Book Marketplace: Well, with a last name like yours, most people might assume that the biggest, or even the sole, influence on you has been your father, Joe Kubert. Is that the case?

Andy Kubert: Sole influence? No. Biggest influence? Yes.

CBM: Is that because of what you learned at his knee, so to speak, or is it because of an appreciation that has come to you later in life?

Kubert: Are you talking about influence in my life, or influence on my work?

CBM: It could be both.

Kubert: It would be different for each one. Influence on my life? Yeah, he's totally the dominating factor and influence on my life! [Hearty general laughter] I see my dad pretty much every day, and we talk pretty much every day. And, to me, both he and my mom, they're the greatest, nicest, sweetest people. I take their advice, I ask for their advice, all the time. And, yeah, I'd say that not only my dad, but my mom, they're both really big influences on my life.

CBM: What are some of the things that you've learned from them? It seems like yours is a really tightly knit family.

Kubert: Yeah. Geez, pretty much everything—from the way I work to the way I conduct business and the way I raise my children—they're the main influence on me.

CBM: What are some of the business aspects your dad taught you?

Kubert: Loyalty. How to deal with editors when you get your jobs. How to be on time. How to meet your deadlines. Return phone calls. Things of that nature. Really common sense things, basically. [Laughter]

CBM: Yeah, but very important things, still.

Kubert: Yeah, very important, common sense, basic things. Maybe not everybody does, but my dad drilled it into me to do it this way.

CBM: How about artistically? What about his work has hit you, and influenced your own work?

Kubert: Oh, it's hit me very big. I love the guy's stuff.

Whenever I read his work as a kid, it wasn't because it was his work, or it was my father's work, it was just because I enjoyed reading it and I got totally engrossed in the stories, just by the way he told them. It wasn't anything to do with him being my dad. I guess you could call that reverse nepotism, I don't know. [General laughter] But it was just I enjoyed his work. And, of course, when you enjoy somebody's work, and when I was getting into drawing comics, he was right there and he was my biggest influence. He would go over my work.

Years ago, when I did go to my father's school, he was teaching all three years at the school. And I had him for all three years, plus I was living at his house, and, whenever I would need help, I would just go upstairs and he would throw tracing paper over it and help me out. So you can't help but have that extra influence, you know?

CBM: I think his influences show up in a number of ways in your work; I'm thinking of the dynamics, and definitely your sense of storytelling. Would you agree with that observation, and are there any other ways it comes out that I might have missed?

Kubert: Well, if you look at the stuff I pencil and ink, you'll see a lot of it, also, in the inking, and the textures that he does. Because he taught me. Basically, he would sit down and show me how to use a brush and how to use a pen. How to use them for different textures and things like that. So you'll see it in that, too.

The storytelling, and everything like that? He taught me pretty much everything, as far as that's concerned.

Larry Hama, when I was first breaking in, helped me out a lot, too, as far as storytelling. He taught me a couple other techniques that really helped me out.

CBM: Care to share one or two with us?

Kubert: Sure. There's one I was just telling my students at the school about. This one works if you're ever stuck trying to figure out an angle, or a shot for a particular situation.

You know what the situation is, you have your script. Say there's two guys fighting on horseback, OK? They're swinging swords and battling one another. One guy has a sword crushing down on a shield. You're trying to figure out a shot. Larry told me what you do is, you have a mental picture in your head of these two guys fighting, and just figure out that you're a cinematographer and you have this little camera. And, in your mind, you take this little camera and go all up and down and around this frozen action scene; and you try to figure out, in your mind, what the best angle is to draw.

That helped me out so much in my career, really, in figuring things out and stuff. And that's one I just told my students about on Monday. And their reaction was, "Oh, yeah! That's pretty cool, that works!" So, I thought it was a real good bit of advice.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ANDY KUBERT

CBM: Yeah. And it's so important, visualization, to the artist.

Kubert: When you're sitting down and you have a scene that you have to do—and you're sitting there, drawing and erasing and trying to figure everything out, and you're just putting lines down—just sit back and think about that one technique, and it just helps you out tremendously. It helps you focus more on what you're doing. It did for me, anyway.

CBM: I'd think it would help you think outside the box, too.

Kubert: Exactly.

CBM: When we talked earlier, before the tape was on, you mentioned a few other artists that have had an influence on you. You mentioned Bernie Wrightson and Hal Foster then. Any others you'd add to the list?

Kubert: Besides those two guys, Alex Raymond, Russ Heath, Milton Caniff, Neal Adams, Jack Kirby.

CBM: That's a pretty hefty, and impressive, list right there. Why don't we talk about Caniff and Foster; what about their work had an impact on you?

Kubert: Well, one thing with Milt [that you need to know is,] when Milt was sick in the hospital and my dad was going down to see him, he was going down with Al Williamson, Milt drew a picture while he was in the hospital for me—and I still have it hanging on the wall of my house—of the Dragon Lady. And he colored it in with pencils and stuff, and it says, "To Andy, from Milton Caniff."

With him, his influence on me is mostly in the spotting of blacks and the storytelling. I just thought he was great, with the depth that he would get, and the focus that he would get, by directing the reader's eye to where he wanted the reader to focus in the panel. That's what I try to figure out when I look at his work, and say, "OK, why would he pick that kind of storytelling angle?" or "Why would he use this framing device here or there?"

Alex Toth is another guy, too. That guy is phenomenal with his angles, and storytelling. And his drawing is great, too.

Who was the other one you asked about?

CBM: Foster, who was quite different from Caniff in a lot of ways, despite the fact that they were both working on strips.

Kubert: Yeah, more of an illustrator. And I love Hal Foster's work; the guy drew beautifully. He drew phenomenally. You could see everything that was going on clearly. It was just gorgeous, gorgeous stuff. And, if you ever get a chance to look at his originals, you know it's even more so.

CBM: Right. And what just occurred to me, was his impeccable choice of moments to illustrate.

Kubert: He would pick the right action, the right position that a figure or horse should be in the story that he was

[continued on page 80]

Summer 2002 Convention Round-Up

Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

The summer convention season can be fun for statue collectors because most of the Who's Who of sculptors and studios are on the circuit displaying prototypes and advance samples of months worth of upcoming releases to tease their fans.

What follows is a show-by-show breakdown (at least of the shows I personally attended) of who was displaying what, to get the old collecting juices flowing. And, since the focus of this column is high-end collectibles, I'll skip all the cool action figures, toys and other stuff the various exhibitors had on display and get to the meat. And, since we're talking "sneak peaks," I'll skip mentions of already-released items (apologies for items released after writing, but before publication of this column). Each successive show listing will only mention additions since the previous show(s).

Wizard World East—Philadelphia May 10-12

DC Direct:

Seen for the first time in public were prototypes of the **Brave & Bold #28** cover re-creation statue, the **Superman #14** cover re-creation statue, the **Classic Aquaman** statue, the **Classic Lex Luthor**, **Bizarro** and **Joker** mini-busts, and the **Batmobile of the 1950s** replica.

Dynamic Forces:

DFE unveiled the first several releases in their new line of **Marvel** busts, including **Shang Chi**, **Gambit** and **Rogue** of the **X-Men**, **Thor**, **Spider-Man** and the **Green Goblin**. Also on display were the full (so far) line of **Alex Ross' Earth X** busts, comprising both already-released items and upcoming releases. But, by far, the most impressive item at the DFE booth was the prototype of the life-size **Spider-Man** bust.

Factory X:

The team from Factory X had the prototypes of the first five products in their series of life-size **Marvel** props. The only one yet released at that time was the **Hammer of Thor**, a massive and amazing piece of hardware constructed with a real metal head, real wooden handle, and real leather windings and strap. Also on display were the **Shield of Captain America** (a real metal disc with real leather straps), the real metal **Helmet of Iron Man** and **Mask of Doctor Doom**, and a set containing the **Gun and Badge**

Bucky. Capt. America's WWII partner, from Bowen Designs

Superman: Arrival in Smallville. Companion piece to the previously released "Departure from Krypton," from DC Direct

Silver-Age Batgirl. From DC Direct

Supergirl Animated. Latest of DC Direct's female characters from the Batman and Superman animated series of the late '90s

of Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.

In addition, statues and busts based on the movie versions of **Spider-Man** and the **Green Goblin** adorned Factory X's display case.

Moore Creations:

Even though sculptor **Clayburn Moore** was not himself present, his show team was on the job with a beautiful assortment of releases past, current, and future. In the "future" column, we had the then-not-yet-released Previews variant version of Moore's statue of Michael Turner's **Fathom**. Also on hand were the prototypes of busts of **Spike** and **Faith** of **Buffy the Vampire Slayer** fame, David Mack's **Kabuki**, and a fully sculpted but unpainted bust of **Magdalena**, the demon-fighting nun from Marc Silvestri's **The Darkness**.

Spider-Man. Life-size bust from Dynamic Forces

Captain America. Life-size bust from Dynamic Forces

Wizard World—Chicago July 5-7

Bowen Designs:

Randy Bowen made his first convention appearance in four years (and his first ever Chicago appearance). In addition to a showcase full of all the remaining upcoming releases in Bowen's soon-to-conclude line of **Marvel** mini-busts (including an as-yet unsolicited **Phoenix/Dark Phoenix** set, **X-Men** villain **Mister Sinister**, and **Bucky**, World War II sidekick of Captain America), a selection of Bowen original character pieces were also on display. A FAQ sheet was available to answer fans' concerns regarding future post-Marvel projects, which include such subjects as **Zorro**, **Flash Gordon** and Lee Falk's **Phantom**.

As a special treat for attendees, a special extra-limited edition chrome-plated variant of the recently released **Silver Surfer** mini-bust was offered for sale. Each bust (and box) was personally autographed by Bowen (busts were signed in advance; boxes were signed at time of purchase). Priced at $45 (no discounts or quantity purchases for dealers), the full run of 500 pieces was sold out in less than two hours on opening day. Some were reselling within the room for $100 to $150 each by the time the show ended. And, within a week after the show, eBay prices had cracked the $300 mark. During the second and third weeks, the $400 and then the $500 barrier fell. By the end of September, a chrome Surfer had sold for $720.

Ming the Merciless. Classic Comic Character #36, from Dark Horse

Yoda. Coming from Gentle Giant Studios and Dark Horse

Iron Man. From Diamond Select

Beast. One of the original Silver-Age X-Men, from Diamond Select. Base interlocks with the other four original X-Men to form a unified display

A couple of weeks after the show, Randy Bowen posted a personal apology on his website for his serious underestimation of demand for the chrome-variant Silver Surfer, and promised to handle things differently for any future exclusives Bowen Designs may offer (see San Diego entry later in this column).

DC Direct:

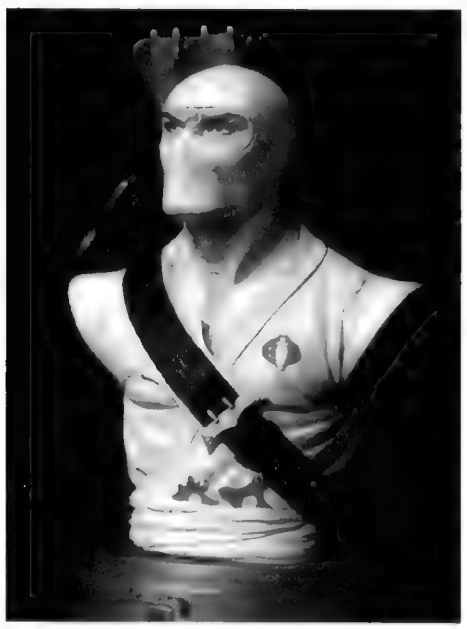
Along with the pieces introduced in Philly, the fans were given advance looks at the **Classic Batgirl** mini-bust, the **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents: Dynamo** statue, the **Animated Supergirl** statue and **Batman** and **Superman** from the upcoming **Super-Friends** statue series.

Dynamic Forces:

In addition to the items displayed in Philadelphia, DFE also unveiled their "Big-

Captain America's Shield. Life-size prop from Factory X

Iron Man's Helmet. Life-size prop from Factory X



Storm Shadow. First release in Palisades Toys line of G.I. Joe mini-busts

Bathing Beauty Katchoo. From writer-artist Terry Moore's "Strangers in Paradise," as sculpted by Clayburn Moore

Busts" of the **Hulk** and the **Abomination**, as well as the prototype of **Captain America**, the second in their series of life-size busts.

Moore Creations:

Clayburn Moore himself was on hand to tease the crowd with a few new prototypes. In addition to the Kabuki bust revealed in Philadelphia were two additional busts in the **Kabuki** series; an Artist's Proof variant of the just-released original (with white face paint and real diamond chips inset across her forehead), and a just-completed rendition of **Snapdragon**. Plus, the **Magdalena** bust seen in raw form in Philly was now painted and sporting a samurai sword in each hand.

ComiCon International—San Diego
August 1-4

Bowen Designs:

I'm including Bowen, even though there was no convention presence, because of a convention tie-in stunt pulled on the Bowen Designs website. While the collecting world attended ComiCon, a website exclusive clear-variant mini-bust of **Iceman** of the **X-Men** was offered to visitors to the site. It was sold out before the rest of us returned from San Diego and even found out it existed (see Bowen's "promise" at the end of his Chicago entry above).

Dark Horse:

Ming the Merciless from the **Classic Comic Characters** line was in attendance, as were the first wave of releases of **Star Wars** mini-busts produced by **Gentle Giant Studios** and marketed through Dark Horse.

DC Direct:

Added to the scheduled seven original pieces in the **JLAnimated** line of maquettes was **Aquaman**. Also on display was the **Power Battery of Abin Sur**, third in the series of **Green Lantern Power Battery** props.

Gentle Giant Studios:

Several more of the **Star Wars** mini-bust prototypes seen at the Dark Horse booth were on display here. The first wave consists of **Mace Windu**, **Obi-Wan Kenobi**, **Anakin Skywalker** and **Padme Amidala**. The second wave features **Count Dooku** (as portrayed by the legendary **Christopher Lee**), and bounty hunters **Jango Fett** and **Zam Wesell**. And the BIG ONES, **Yoda** and **Darth Vader**.

Also displayed were prototypes of mini-bust series based on characters from **The Matrix** and comics series **The Red Star**.

As an added bonus, Gentle Giant's set-up included their mobile laser-imaging lab, contained in a large trailer. The laser-imager is used to do body-scans of subjects for sculptures and action figures, assuring life-like accuracy of the finished product.

Moore Creations:

The most fascinating aspect of Moore's setup in San Diego was the opportunity to watch the evolution of a sculpture. On Saturday, fans were treated to an unpainted prototype of **Bathing Beauty Katchoo** from writer-artist **Terry Moore's** (no relation!) **Strangers in Paradise**.

On Sunday, Katchoo and her bathtub were back in full color, after being fully and freshly painted in Clayburn Moore's hotel room Saturday night.

I'm sure I've missed somebody, but, hey, they're big shows with only one of me to cover all that territory. If you're a sculptor or studio, and feel slighted, drop me a line and maybe we can focus a whole column on you and your work.

The Michael Naiman Report

The Wacky Hall of Fame

If you are lucky enough to stick with this hobby for a prolonged time, one can observe the cycles of boom and bust, fads and foibles that many collectors go through. There's the Speculator/Investor era as well as the latest "Hot" book stampede that always manages to dissipate after the initial fever cools. We see them come and go. But the real thrill in it all is observing (and hopefully enjoying) the continuity of the timeline.

I've been lucky to have lifelong friends (who just happen to be collectors) who have made an impact in this hobby. I can vividly remember the day back in seventh grade when three of us held Scott Shaw pinned to the ground in his back yard and made him writhe in pubescent terror as we threatened to burn his MAD magazine collection. Sick teens attempting to inflict the maximum emotional damage to each other. Normal teens, right? We were competing cartoonists/artists way back then. One was completely bereft of talent...and the other single-mindedly determined to be "a cartoonist" when he grew up. And that's what Scott became...however, much more than a cartoonist.

I've always admired Scott's "Oddball Comics" work and never thought that I'd see the day (or get that old) when his thought provoking insight, sarcasm and humor might spawn what I've come to call...The Son of Shaw!

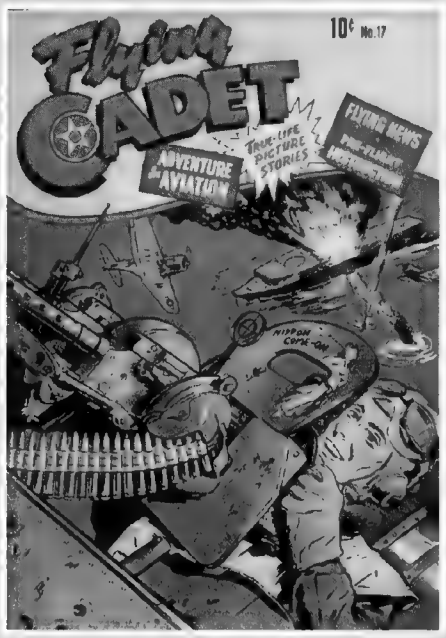
Sure enough, along comes collector Jeff Rader...Purveyor of the Perverse and Peculiar! Oddball books are his specialty! When the hunt for the high grade is over (and your pocketbook is looking for a breather)...this might be the place to go looking for entertainment!

According to Rader, "One thing about offbeat books is that, many esoteric collectors do not focus on the grade. I think that most are just happy to find a copy of an oddball book. Check out the prices some have sold for in relation to the grade. Regardless of grade, a large portion of the books I specialize in go for over Guide or multiples of Guide. These collectors realize that if they are waiting around for a high grade slabbed copy of these books they may never get any copy at all."

You want to collect esoteric books? Rare books? Giveaways? Syphilis memorabilia?? Then a copy of the hard-to believe Doc Carter VD Comics, published back in 1949 by Health Publications Institute, is the one for you. This book has some really lousy artwork by Bill Hinnant but the content and story more than make up for its amateurish look. Doc Carter moves to Carbiville and promptly sets about ridding this burg of STDs, prostitution, the Red Light district, the town mobster "Marby" (Heh heh!!) and all immorality in general. This town really must have been in bad shape if they let a guy like this take over... Doc makes sure everybody knows that syphilis causes heart attacks, defects and insanity and sets to cleaning up the town. After a Marby's crew brutally attacks and beats one of his own men (actually one of the most hilarious segments in this book, and there are a LOT!) Doc manages to take Marby down and whup the town into shape. He must not have done a very good job, though, because he had to come back a year later and straighten Carbiville out once again. But to get the details on that adventure you'll have to go find a copy of the unlisted Doc Carter Comics. A VG copy recently sold for $78.77.

You think a copy of Doc Carter VD Comics is hard to find? Then just try to find a copy of this! This is a copy of Doc Carter Comics & Phil Mann Comes Home, which is the second title featuring the good Doc doing good in the disease-prone town of Carbiville. This issue is listed as being VD-graphic 102, but has no other publication data or date information except that the other issue is 1949 and that story takes place a year prior to this one. This book is unlisted in Overstreet which means it must be pretty darned rare considering the first issue has been known but this issue has not been mentioned...until now!

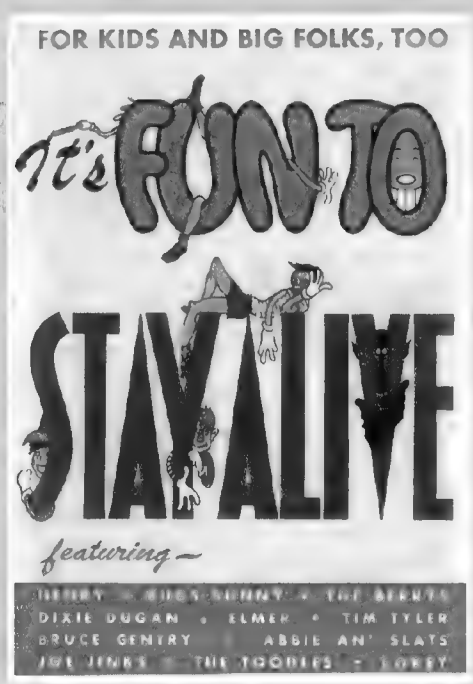
In this issue Doc has to track down who is passing gonorrhea to whom. Doc tells Phil that he has gonorrhea and then he breaks the news to Phil's fiancee Helen, who owns up to being a bit lonely and loose herself. This book is CLASSIC!! A solid copy sold for $94.11.



Two more additions to anyone's Wacky Hall of Fame collection should include Flying Cadet #17 (volume 2 #7) published in October 1944. It is one of those wild, obscure books that those in the know are looking for but nobody can find. Grab your Gerber and take a close look at the cover! The artist took it upon himself to slip in a topless woman! There are a handful of bare-breasted cover comics in the Golden Age and this is one of the more overt and desirable issues! I wonder how many hit the garbage or fireplace after Junior got caught getting excited over this comic! A VF copy sold for $243.06, or 7.6X Guide!

The It's Fun to Stay Alive giveaway, from 1948, features Bugs Bunny, Henry, Toodles, Bruce Gentry, The Berrys, Tim Tyler (showing a kid that just got smacked by a speeding car), Elmer, Joe Jinks, a beautiful one-page Abbie and Slats, Dixie Dugan and Cokey and other little strips on how not to get killed by cars. How can you miss with a book devoted to avoiding death by automobile? A NM+ copy sold for $112.50.

The list goes on and on! The point here is that there's a huge field of collecting genres out there. Don't pigeonhole yourself or become a slave to the "latest and greatest" thing that comes along. Getting caught up in the stampede can lead to some disastrous financial results. Too many newer collectors measure their self-worth by what they collect. Let's break away from that mold and have some fun in the hobby...like it's supposed to be!



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CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#49 VG $138 58%

Adventure
#207 FN $28 25%
#216 FN $28 27%
#218 FN $16 17%
#225 FN $17 19%
#227 FN $23 26%
#231 FN $17 19%

All-Select
#5 GD $225 1.45X

Amazing Adventures
#11 VF $60 82%

Amazing Spider-Man
#13 GD $75 1.19X
#27 VF $52 23%
#28 VG $69 80%
#36 VF $31 22%
#42 VF $45 38%
#47 VF $26 30%
#51 VG $44 1.06X
#56 VF $38 58%
#59 VF $50 77%
#66 VF $21 42%
#68 VF $33 66%
#69 VF $17 34%
#70 VF $29 58%
#82 VF $26 68%
#91 VF $32 84%
#92 VF $35 92%
#94 VF $37 59%
#117 VF $10 34%
#176 NM $19 86%
#194 NM $30 1.66
#195 NM $25 2.5X
#298 NM $18 50%
#300 NM $37 50%

Atom-Age Combat
#3 VG $14 35%

Batman
#36 GD $57 51%
#77 GD $61 Guide
#159 NM $118 84%
#191 NM $27 60%
#200 VF $23 25%

Blackhawk
#14 VG $61 40%
#19 GD $37 30%
#39 GD $21 27%
#52 VG $28 46%

Captain Marvel Junior
#12 FN $228 1.15X
#17 FN $99 60%
#19 VF $229 67%
#21 FN $112 83%
#26 FN $103 76%
#30 FN $46 46%
#39 VG $34 52%
#43 FN $43 57%
#49 FN $52 69%
#58 VG $35 70%
#64 FN $35 70%
#71 FN $47 87%
#100 VG $40 95%

Captain Midnight
#2 VG $100 37%

Captain Science
#1 VG $100 60%

Choice
#1 VG $96 29%
#2 VG $41 24%

Conan
#5 NM $65 93%

Crash
#2 GD $81 54%

Daredevil
#168 NM $90 1.63X

Defenders
#7 NM $16 70%
#12 NM $10 79%

Detective
#124 GD $90 97%
#132 GD $69 1.17X
#288 FN $27 53%

Dollman
#20 VG $52 64%
#30 FN $53 45%

Flash
#123 GD $30 28%
#175 VF $32 29%
#188 VF $22 73%

Hangman
#2(#1) GD $327 1.71X

Hulk
#134 VF $14 1.07X
#151 NM $17 1.38X
#153 NM $15 1.23X
#162 VF $15 1.11X
#173 NM $10 95%

Joe Palooka
#3 VF $120 1.56X

Jumbo
#87 FN $35 55%

Marvel Feature
#12 NM $29 1.32X

Marvel Mystery
#22 VG $370 97%
#78 FN $215 68%

Marvel Premiere
#6 NM $16 1.1X
#8 NM $10 68%
#21 NM $16 89%

Military
#34 VF $150 45%
#40 VG $75 68%

Modern
#78 FN $104 96%

National
#49 FN $25 35%

Navy Action
#6 VG $12 75%
#11 VG $21 1.31X
#15 VG $19 1.36X
#16 VG $23 1.64X
#17 FN $23 1.09X
#17 GD $15 2.14X

Navy Tales
#1 FN $25 52%
#2 VG $22 79%
#3 VG $18 75%

Pep
#34 GD $104 1.42X

Plastic Man
#18 GD $85 1.6X

Richie Rich
#6 GD $22 1.22X
#20 GD $21 1.75X

Shield (1973)
#1 NM $16 Guide
#5 NM $16 2X

Showcase
#5 FN $158 70%
#14 GD $255 77%
#34 VG $190 87%
#37 VG $126 1.14X
#40 VG $21 36%

Space Patrol
#1 VG $135 78%

Star Spangled
#122 FN $82 66%
#123 VG $36 58%

Straight Arrow
#2 GD $26 1.13X
#3 VG $18 28%
#4 VG $12 29%
#5 FN $12 19%
#8 FN $16 27%
#10 VG $18 44%
#15 FN $17 22%

Strange Adventures
#93 VG $17 61%

Superboy
#106 VF $31 82%

Superman
#41 FN $172 72%
#89 GD $64 1.21X
#100 VG $153 38%
#200 VF $21 52%

Tales from the Crypt
#33 VG $113 88%

Tales to Astonish
#61 VF $70 1.32X
#65 NM $52 61%
#68 FN $18 86%
#85 NM $40 73%
#93 NM $73 91%
#100 NM $50 77%

Terrific
#6 FN $320 48%

Tomb of Dracula
#15 NM $19 84%
#19 NM $19 84%
#50 NM $41 2.56X

Uncle Sam Quarterly
#5 FN $195 65%

Uncle Scrooge
#12 VF $50 51%
#137 NM $23 92%
#145 NM $24 96%

Whiz
#40 GD $39 98%
#58 VG $42 70%
#80 VG $41 82%
#81 VG $31 62%
#111 VG $31 65%
#133 VG $46 96%
#29 VG $75 1.29X

MARKET REPORTS

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Comics, comics, comics. Comics are selling like hot cakes, cheesecake and beefcake these days. **CGC high grade** hopeful, **Internet** and **con-floor** hustlers looking for the next big dig, ready to squeal or peel when they chance upon something too tempting to pass up. "Is it really this nice? Maybe I can talk them down on their price if I whine about some irrelevant, hardly noticeable glitch." Or "Wow, this is nice! I better shut-up, pay up and bless the high grade gods that I happened to be the lucky bum who found this."

Either way is just another symptom of that incurable need to satiate some overly compulsive, as close to perfect, number fixated neurosis. This is brought about of course, by the hope of big bucks that can be realized for their efforts and willingness to participate in the wacky high-grade back issue frenzy that's happening.

And on the opposite end of the spectrum, the humble (yeah, right) **collector** who is very busy just looking for something to quell some inner demon that needs, feeds and allows for a less than exemplary copy of any-book-USA. "Just one more," they say to themselves, something to calm that heady persistent Jones that adding another funny-book to the pile will cure.

This is all good. The speculator/investor is willing to participate with their energy and capitol. The collector, be they super high-grade excited, or one of those just needing a copy, any copy. Both give the hobby an over-all well roundedness. Appreciate both for their tireless antics and willingness to hang in there and deal with us. On all fronts people complain that things are either too much, or not enough. It has always been that way and I would bet it always will. Happiness, and good will in your search.

Some **recent sales**: Captain America #38 Fair $100; Phantom Lady #19 FN/VF $700, #20 FN/VF $600; Marvel Mystery #22 VG $400; Action #28 VG $450; Blue Beetle #31 VG $100; Daredevil #2 VF $300; Amazing Spider-Man Annual #3 NM- $150; Amazing Spider-Man #11 FN/VF $200, #12 FN/VF $200, #13 FN/VF $275, #14 FN/VF $800, #15 VF- $375, #16 VF+ $425, #17 VF- $400, #19 VF- $225, #25 FN/VF $200, #27 VF+ $325; Batman #199 NM $100; Daredevil #158 9.4 $250, #168 9.4 $375, #168 9.0 $225, #168 8.5 $150; Flash #175 VF/NM $125.

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It seems like the comic book market is still continuing its move **higher**. The recent auctions by Heritage Comics and numerous other sales all seem to point in this direction. MastroNet will soon be starting their fall auction and just continues to have great quality items. Included in the upcoming **MastroNet** sale are the court copy of Action #1 (used in the lawsuit against Fox), More Fun #54 CGC 8.0, Marvel Comics #1 CGC 6.0, All Winners #1 CGC 9.2 and more. This auction, like the previous Americana auctions by MastroNet, should have something for everyone. **CGC books** continue to sell very well. Some collectors have backed off on the prices that were seen in the past two years. While it is true these books are still selling for multiples of Guide today. There are still a number of great first appearances and origin issues of characters that have yet to be certified. CGC has an online forum where collectors can chat on numerous topics. This forum is always a lively area anytime of the day.

Golden Age comics are selling well in all grades overall. Timely comics are still high on our want lists, but are not easily filled. Hard-to-find Golden Age also are selling well when available in any grade. These include the missing Gerber Photo Journal comics and also numerous low print run comics. The one area where we are seeing some resistance to current prices is that of **restored** comics. Hopefully at some point in the future the market will see that professional restoration should be valued differently then amateur work. Till next month: Happy Hunting!!

Sales: Bronze Age Amazing Spider-Man #157 CGC 9.6 $47; Howard The Duck #3 CGC 9.6 $52 (30 cent variant); Spectacular Spider-Man #4 CGC 9.8 $72.99; Super-Villain Team Up #1 CGC 9.6 $34; X-Men #119 CGC 9.6 $100.

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Ebay has changed the face of the comic collecting world like nothing else (well, maybe slabbing, but I'll get to that in a bit). If you've got the time, patience and money you can fill just about any gap in your collection. Whereas we used to have to wait for the Guide and pray that nobody beat you on that one-of-a-kind find, which was most often the case, now we have only to flick the computer on and search away. There is always that rare, elusive book that will keep you digging for years but, hey, that's the fun part.

Since eBay I have found books that I sought for the previous couple decades and others I never even knew existed. Ebay has also defined a few areas of interest that have taken on a life of their own. Before, westerns used to linger in boxes unsold. With eBay you've got collectors of western (enter any area of collecting here) memorabilia checking in and paying dearly for those previously unwanted books. Even coverless/incomplete books usually find

a happy buyer. Though I have been collecting for nearly 30 years, I have met more collectors and all around great people in just this past year due to online sales. If you haven't tried it yet, what's keeping you? You definitely will not regret it!

Recent sales: A NM Crime Clinic #11 with a Norm Saunders outrageous killer ventriloquist dummy cover sold for $114. A mid-grade All Funny #1 with the first appearance of Buzzy went for $113; Buzzy #1 FN $61. A NM- Jiggs & Maggie #11 (#1) NM $50. A batch of The Captain and the Kids brought on some rabid bidding with a Very Fine #16 ending at $64, Very Good+ #17 for $47, Good+ #18 for $10, a Very Fine copy of the Special Fall Issue went for $41, a Very Fine Special Summer Issue for $76 and a Very Fine Four Color #881 ended at $41. Five of the six issues are also listed as being 7s on the Gerber Scarcity Index.

Giveaways sure seem to be holding their own. My Fine 1938 Cocomalt Big Book of Comics, with early artwork by Will Eisner went for $255. Doc Carter VD Comics, one of the unintentionally funniest books I've ever seen, sold for $78, and its companion, the unlisted Doc Carter sold for $94. An unlisted Dutch Boy giveaway sold for $81. Two 1950 Near Mint- Wisco/Klarer giveaways, Slim Morgan and a Blaze Carson sold for $20 and $22, respectively. A Very Fine+ Archie's Girls Betty and Veronica #75, in which the girls sold their souls to the devil (years before Ozzy ever got the idea) for Archie's attention, ended at $62. A Fine Coo Coo #2, in which Supermouse battles some anthropomorphic Nazis, went for $42. My Very Good Miss America #3 with an overlooked couple of super heroine stories sold for $71. A stunning Very Fine Gumps #3 from 1926 sold for $103. The 1939 A Merry Christmas from Sears Toyland, with all the great newspaper strip characters ended at $316. Last but not least is my favorite sale of the month, a Very Good copy of Noodnik #1, a 3-D issue without the glasses, sold for a wild multiple of Guide $147! This kiddie book has an out-of-place 3-D bra ad that is just too funny.

Sure can't forget a touch of **CGC Madness** to make you wonder, "What in the world is going on here?!" How about the GD/VG 3.0 World's Finest #200 that failed to find a buyer at $25 (though NM Guide is $28)? I can just imagine... "Well, I knew it was low grade but I felt so much better having CGC confirm it for me." Somebody, please wake me up!

That's it this time around. I know it has been stated countless times before, but nothing is truer—**buy what you love!** At least when the comic market takes a hit, you'll have a bunch of great reading to keep yourself entertained. The best way to get your money's worth out of your comics is to peel those covers back and read away. Back again next time with some more offbeat books.

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Hello from Central Florida. We are getting into our late autumn groove. **Autumn sales** at the store were average. We held our own but did not set any records. Considering the fact that another longstanding store went out of business in the Orlando area this past month we are thankful to be having a decent year. It is certainly a challenge to run a successful over-the-counter retail shop in the face of increasing Internet competition and a generally fickle buying public. Quality conventions are few and far between.

The collector crowd is dollar poor and few large sales (over $1000) take place. Many collectors are filling their needs over the Internet nowadays and no longer feel the need to attend local shows. The over-the-counter retail business is forever changing. Many stores will not survive. Internet sales at close-to-retail price would be fine, however that is usually not the case. For the most part the Internet mindset is that of a flea market and collectors expect huge discounts. Not good if a dealer has paid a fair price for a collection and is looking to make a reasonable markup. The next year will be interesting.

By the way—does anyone else wonder about some of these ridiculous **auction results** on recently offered comic books and comic art? If the reported winning bid prices are to be believed then much of the desirable product is far out of reach for the vast majority of collectors. I mean are these reported figures actually cash transactions or is there a bit of trade/hype involved with all this. It would also be interesting to see a list of the supposed buyers along with a copy of the form of payment—it might surprise many to see how small the inner circle of serious high rollers may be.

Silver Age 1955-1969: The store has been quiet since I returned from my summer travels. A few DCs have sold. High grade keys always seem to be in demand, however often times when I produce the book the collector will not pay retail for it. Certain Marvel titles remain popular (Spider-Man, Hulk) but most are slow. Non-Marvel and DC silver age remain stagnant, especially at Overstreet prices.

Recent sales: Amazing Spider-Man #40 VF/NM $275; Batman Annual #1 VG $85; Brave & Bold #28 GD $295; Superman #149 VF $50; Fantastic Four #24 VG $40; Turok # 28 VF $20; Daredevil #1 FN $500.

Golden Age 1935-1955: We have moved many early World's Finest this month. Many sold below Guide. Many of the longstanding DC gold books will sell at 20%-40% below Guide. I just have trouble getting full Overstreet for most books from this period. The overall prices in the Guide need to be adjusted. Exceptions would be WW II covers and classic art covers.

Recent sales: Superman #7 VG $400; Jungle #29 NM $350; Batman #19 FN $400; Archie Annual #1 GD $75; Human Torch # 20 VG $200.

Original Art & Toys: Not overly active this month. No collections of art or toys came in. We looked at one group of funny animal strip art but could not agree on a price with the owner.

Sales: Win Mortimer daily strip $35; Dan Decarlo Archie page $75; Dick Tracy daily strip $250; Dean Morrisey oil painting $2750; Spider-Man Capt. Action suit $300; 1955 Disneyland program book $100.

When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello. See you in thirty!

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

INSPIRATION CENTRAL: ANDY KUBERT

[continued from page 71]

describing. It just looked like, "Oh, he just nailed it." All the time, usually, you know? That's difficult to do.

CBM: Yeah, because the other thing that's occurred to me is, because of the nature of the stories he was illustrating, a lot of times it was just talking heads. And yet it's still an exciting thing; he would just capture the quintessence of that moment.

Kubert: He would get the acting down, and the dramatization down, of the characters. I'm just wondering if he ever took acting classes or anything like that, because he was really, really good at that in his drawing.

CBM: Good question. I'm going to have to do some research now. [Laughter]

Well, what about Wrightson? Was it that incredible command of illustrative techniques that drew you to his work?

Kubert: I guess, yeah. Bernie drew all these cool monsters, with a lot of textures in it. His layouts and his designs and spotting of blacks were just phenomenal. And he just drew some really, really cool stuff. I just enjoyed looking at the guy's work. [General laughter] And I loved his inking. His brushy kind of inking that he's done? It was just beautiful stuff.

CBM: As far as Neal Adams, was it the design aspects of the work, or were there other things that hit you, as well?

Kubert: I think it was the Batman stuff he did. I loved his Batman work! [Laughter] I don't know whether it was the design or what. I loved reading his work, too.

CBM: What about this Kirby guy?

Kubert: Kirby would get, like with everybody, he would get an action thing going in what he did that is just great. His figures moved. They jump out at you, they jump away from you. He was a great, great super-hero artist. He's a real good guy to look at when you want to be a super-hero artist. He had it all going in there.

CBM: What do you hope that people get from your work?

Kubert: I just hope they like it. [Laughter] I hope they like it. I hope when they read it, they can see what's going on. I hope they get the same feeling from my work as I did when I used to read comics I enjoyed. I just want them to get engrossed in the thing, and just to blot out everything else that's going on around them, like I used to do, and just get totally involved in the whole thing.

That's what I hope. That's what I'm trying to do in my work.

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